

Julia Anderson: “Saratoga Race Course: Exploring its Role as Both a Connecting and Dividing Element in the Local Community”

Examining the original purpose and the history of Saratoga Race Course juxtaposed with its use and intentions today reveals that the race course is a far more inclusive place than it was in the Nineteenth Century. Thoroughbred racing, once strictly a wealthy white man’s sport, has grown to include a diversity of riders, employees, track-goers, and off-track participants. While this diversity has had certain obvious benefits, it has also created significant race, class and gender tensions within the Saratoga Community and has resulted in a love-hate relationship of residents with the facility. Using an intersectional lens I show how and why current employees at the track as well as local residents of the town express both positive and negative responses to these changes, and I speculate what these mixed reviews suggest about diversity as an industry goal.

Regina Bonsu: “In Loving Memory of W.E.B. Du Bois: Communism, Pan-Africanism and the ‘Othering’ of W.E.B Du Bois”

When W.E.B. DuBois died in Ghana in 1963, he was recognized by many Africans as an important world leader, and his life and works were commemorated in the W.E.B. Du Bois Centre for Pan African Culture, built in 1985. In Great Barrington, Massachusetts, however, where Du Bois was born and raised, little was done to commemorate his life in any official way until 2009, when the National Historic Site for W.E.B Du Bois was established, first with the preservation of DuBois’s homestead, followed by a bookstore in 2015. This paper asks why there was such a long delay before Americans acknowledged what Africans had long accepted—that DuBois was an important international figure whose memory needed to be preserved. I investigate the factors that contributed to the lack of preservation of Du Bois’ homestead in his native country, examining the ways in which his ideologies (both communism and Pan-Africanism) resulted in the “othering” of his identity. I also consider why those in Ghana embraced these ideologies as mainstream principles and commemorated DuBois as a native son in an adopted country.

J. P. Choe: “Superman, the Man of Steel with Character of Complexity”

Since his creation in the 1930's, Superman has risen to be the face of DC comics and one of the most known and popular comic book superheroes in the world. From his original inception as a super heroic character that was facing off against greed and corruption during the Great Depression to his incarnation as a costumed superhero who fights against maniacal super villains and galactic threats, Superman has been an adaptable superhero experienced at fighting for justice, freedom and the American way. From comic books, movies and both live action and animated shows, Superman has

permeated the global popular culture to the point where anyone would recognize his red and yellow shield. But the character is far more complex and multi-dimensional than regular people assume him to be. Superman is a character that has undergone numerous transformations and adaptations, and he is popular today because as a character has been responsive to the changing needs and wants of his creators and the consumers of his messages. Because he is so resilient, he has also become more complicated, and it is in that complexity that we see Superman's greatest potential as a cultural agent.

Hannah Doban: "The Anti-Hero: How the Mobsters, Drug Dealers and Narcissists Saved American Television"

Television, once an escapist's dream complete with laugh tracks and morals-of-the-story, used to be a maligned medium. It had a reputation no better than that of religious pamphlets, and it was deemed unworthy of critical dissemination or deeper understanding. In recent years, however, television has undergone a massive revolution. This is in large part due to the emergence of the Anti-Hero character, a central figure who lacks conventional heroic qualities, such as courage, honesty, and morality. They are bigots, ignorant, selfish and addicts. Their qualities are those that belong normally to villains, yet their human flaws make them sympathetic, relatable, and even likeable. This paper will examine three main Anti-Heroes: Tony Soprano (The Sopranos), Don Draper (Mad Men), and Walter White (Breaking Bad), as well as look at race within the Anti-Hero trope (Omar Little on The Wire) and gender (Why are all Anti-Heroes male? Is there such thing as an Anti-Heroine?) During the so-called Third Age, Anti-Heroes became popular as a way to cope, understand, and negotiate a new reality. By repurposing the Anti-Hero in a late-20th and early-21st century context to reflect widespread cultural concerns and realities, a seriousness was lent to TV not only elevated the medium, it saved it.

Lisa Fierstein: "For our Amusement: Storytelling, Entertainment, and Empathy in Ira Glass' *This American Life*"

Since 1995, Ira Glass' distinct voice has graced the National Public Radio airwaves with his poignant and journalistic show about the lives of everyday people: *This American Life*. With more than twenty years on-air and millions of people tuning in each week, Ira Glass has become a radio icon, master storyteller, and entertainer. Each episode has a compelling narrative that also acts as a commentary on how to tell a story and what makes a good story. His storytelling process is a central part of each episode, as he guides listeners along, encouraging participation by posing open-ended questions, asking them to rethink what they thought they knew, and editing-in moments of reflection for the narrator, characters, and listeners. He uses the medium of radio in a purposeful manner, which creates an intimate listening experience that allows listeners

to feel connected to the story and empathize with the characters. Humor is another driving force behind why Ira Glass continues to tirelessly produce engaging material on unconventional and seemingly banal topics. While not every episode deals with a topic that is conventionally funny, Ira Glass makes it part of his mission to add tinges of humor to counter the harrowing stories delivered by more traditional news media sources. By incorporating humor and a traditional narrative structure in *This American Life*, radio celebrity Ira Glass creates an accessible human-interest show that encourages audience participation through empathy and reflection.

Sophia Inkeles: “Mishpucha at the Movies: Exploring Identity through Cinematic Representations of the Jewish Family”

Focusing on cinematic representations of the Jewish family in the late 20th century, this paper analyzes the ways in which film both reflects and reproduces understandings of contemporary Jewish American identity. In the Jewish tradition, the onus of religious preservation is placed on the family. Families are responsible for passing down customs and maintaining religious practices from generation to generation. Families are therefore largely important in informing a distinctive Jewish identity. As Jewish immigrants assimilated, however, they were forced to reform and adapt their customs to the unique contours of American society. While this shift allowed Jews access to better opportunities and improved their overall currency within the cultural landscape, it also resulted in a generational divide, creating an uneasy tension between religious belonging and national identity. The films under consideration provide nuanced and multilayered representations of American Jewish family life, thereby reflecting the anxieties and consequences of intense assimilation. In doing so, they offer an interpretation of Jewish identity defined less by religious observance than by a sense of cultural belonging.

Tessa Jane Kalinosky

Over the past 25 years American craft breweries have increased exponentially. Craft brewers are forced to navigate the tensions that develop as they try to negotiate their roles as community members, both consumer- and producer-based, and as the creators of small businesses with increasing ambitions that may extend beyond the community. These tensions are navigated in ways that illustrate the important degree to which the craft brewing industry is a fundamentally American business. Many craft brewers were started with little knowledge of business practices needed to establish an organization. Instead the founders were incredibly product-based which led to a high level of sincerity reflected in their operations. I look to the formation of a community among the brewers as well as the consumers as a way to show that these seemingly opposing aspects have instead been used to complement each other. These aspects of the craft beer

movement lend themselves to seeing the industry as categorically American and the brewers as exemplifying the American dream.

Nevon Kipperman: “Digesting” Identities: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender through Food in Film

Whether it appears as a vehicle for conversation over the dinner table, a means for defining characters, or an element of the setting, food plays a central role in American film. Because food is vital for human survival, it is impossible for consumers not to project their own cultural associations with food into the films in which it appears. Food is pervasive, and its omnipresence in movies reflects the ways in which food production, food consumption, and food products are used both subliminally and intentionally as a way to make subjects more “digestible” within film, which in itself is a unique medium because it has the ability to present constructed representations of human interaction that often rely on simplified versions of whole cultures and identities. In attempting to construct these simplified representations, food comes into play, and in turn addresses issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. By studying various films, I intend to explore the ways in which food is used to speak for greater issues of intersectionality as they relate to different identities and as a way to perpetuate cultural narratives that reveal dominant ideologies relating to these areas of identity. I argue that food is a powerful tool in asserting cultural narratives within film, because food’s vital role in daily life prompts food to function as more than a backdrop of the setting, and operate as a method for consumers to make sense of subjects that are otherwise not addressed explicitly. In film, food is a marker of social status, class, femininity, masculinity, and endless other methods of characterization. From Walt Disney Pictures’ *Mulan* to Martin Scorsese’s *GoodFellas* to John Hughes’ *The Breakfast Club*, food presents itself as an indicator of larger cultural and social themes, and offers a paradigm that illuminates these themes by making them “digestible” for consumers.

Claire Lindsay: “Appropriating Organic: A Comparison between the Mission of Small-Scale Organic Farms and Big Organic Marketing Strategies”

As a result of the nation’s accelerated interests in “organic” food products, farming corporations have capitalized on this awareness and are using the term “organic” as well as the narrative of the American Farmer to market their products. In spite of the romantic visions of farm fresh food illustrated by Big Organic companies, small-scale organic farmers have a very different idea of what it means to be organic, an idea that seems more in line with what consumers think they are getting when they buy “organic”

labeled products. By appropriating “organic,” Big Organic corporations have seduced consumers into choosing conveniently placed and packaged products that are not in line with the spirit of small-scale organic farming.

Markus Messoro: *What Mauled the Mall?: The Decline of the American Shopping Mall*

Throughout the 20th century, the shopping mall was the quintessential retail center in America. It served as both a place to shop and a place to spend one’s leisure time. Malls proliferated through the suburban landscape and became symbols of American consumer culture. Since the turn of the century however, malls have been in a state of decline, with new malls ceasing to open and many existing malls closing their doors. This indicates a significant shift in America's methods of consumption. Many have been quick to blame online retailers for the decline of malls, but this is only partially accurate. To understand their fall, a more holistic and nuanced view is necessary. The decline of the shopping mall in America is a result of several factors including online retail and the rise of technology, changing demographics among the American middle class and over-development of commercial areas. By understanding these complex factors, we can examine not only what made the mall popular initially but also what led to its decline and what the future holds for malls.

Dan Plumer: “The Difference between Differents: Intersectional Thinking and the Children’s Crusade”

In recent decades, many high-schools across the United States have begun teaching a simplified narrative of the African-American Civil Rights Movement. This narrative reduces a complicated period in American history to a story centered on a mythologized Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., told entirely from the perspective of the non-violent faction of the movement. Not only does the narrative omit much of the movement’s history, it obscures the underlying forces that powered the Civil Rights Movement and reduces its relevance to our cultural moment today. The controversial “Children’s Crusade” in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, illustrates the competing ideologies of crucial players involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Civil rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr. and Fred Shuttlesworth, local businessman, A.G. Gaston, and Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety, Bull Connor, had wildly different convictions of which tactical strategies would best ensure (or prohibit) the success and long-term survival of the Civil Rights Movement. I use each of these leaders’ philosophies on civil rights strategy and their reactions to the Children’s Crusade as distinct perspectives from which I investigate the protest. I argue that studying the Children’s Crusade from multiple perspectives, and studying the intersections between these perspectives, unlocks a more complex, complete version of this historic event that is nuanced, powerful and compelling. The deeper understanding we gain from studying the Children’s Crusade in this multi-

perspectival way helps us more accurately understand our collective past, and provides us with a framework for understanding issues of race in America today.

Nick Shafir: “Writing On The Wall: Defending the Behavior of America’s Wealthiest Artist”

David Choe was born into a struggling Korean American family in Los Angeles, California in 1976. Having made a series of questionable life decisions that left him nearly destitute, he hit the jackpot with a gamble involving a fledgling start-up company (Facebook) that made him the highest paid living artist in the world. Since then, his name has become synonymous with notorious behavior, as he has been involved in a series of controversial public performances ranging from high stakes scavenger hunts to co-hosting a podcast with a porn star. By examining David Choe’s portrayal in the media in association with Choe’s own self-presentations and my personal estimations of him, I argue in this paper that Choe is not a miser who is abusive of his wealth and power; he is rather an eccentric artist who is redefining the American Dream by challenging the standard rags-to-riches narrative on which it is based.

Dorothea Trufelman: “Get Me the Pictures, I’ll Get You the War”: The Misconceptions and Representations of Cuba Through American Photographs

The image of Cuba as a land of picturesque decay, from the peeling houses of Havana to a farmer’s leathery face, has been shaped by foreign photographers who provide us insight into the seductive, visual landscape of the country through their images. American photographers in particular have had rare access to a country that few of us have seen ourselves and have thus shaped our visual perceptions to a considerable degree. Those famous for their photographs of Cuba employ a more complex and nuanced photographic approach in terms of subject matter, composition, and cultural and historical suggestion, yet they often iconize or disguise the political, social and economic crises of Cuba in exchange for those that play to the American fantasy of a land stuck in time. These image-makers and their images are crucial to our popular conceptualizations of Cuba, and this paper will consider how these dominant forms will affect the ways Americans relate to the island now that barriers to entry to Cuba have been eased.

Mollie Welch: “The Motorcycle Outlaw: American Hero or American Pariah?”

The motorcycle outlaw has been at once an American icon and pariah since the mid-1940s. Motorcycle clubs (MCs) sprang up on the large scale after World War II, when men returned home to the United States in hordes, unable or unwilling to resume the

jobs they held before the war. Riding the roads in pursuit of personal freedom, outlaw bikers have been perceived by some admirers as lone wolves: ultra-masculine, dangerous and heroic in their rejection of societal norms. Others, however, are less admirers than critics, adopting a negative opinion of outlaw bikers after events such as the 1947 riot in Hollister, CA. Since then, the stagnant negative image of bikers (and their acceptance of and conformity to this menacing stereotype) has led to their social ostracization. Surprisingly, though, the tenets of motorcycle culture echo several core features of American road narratives--rugged individualism, brotherhood, venturing west, and freedom above all else—raising a question about whether living up to American ideals requires an ironic rejection of some elements of the culture on which those ideals are predicated. In this paper, I argue that because of their complicated commitment to American ideals which they embrace in principle but defy in practice, bikers are at once American heroes and American pariahs.