

# The University of Iowa American Studies Newsletter

November 2002

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## American Studies and Back to the Future

When I recently attended the fall MAASA board meeting, the most memorable moment occurred during a conversation with the head of American Studies at the University of Minnesota. She insisted that American Studies should not worry about its “center,” core, or methods because now that America is defined as a multicultural society, “we all do American Studies.” I vehemently countered that American Studies is not defined by the object studied but by our methods, approaches, and traditions – that is what makes us disciplined and a discipline. In American Studies, America-the-object may have evolved from a nationalist enterprise to a hegemonic power (requiring critique and resistance) to a multicultural society to the dominant player in globalization issues. But what is central is the synthesis of humanistic and social scientific perspectives, approaches that consider “the big picture” of America in relationship to its parts, methods and practices that define not just an “area” study or the study of culture generally but sensitively delimit the historical disposition of this nation. The best results of American Studies — whether in scholarship, teaching, exhibitions, or other public effects — have always defined a convergence of theory and history.

My defense of American Studies as a discipline with a strong foundation led everyone seated around the table to take sides: the discussion got quite heated. Of course, it is only natural that, when American Studies types get together, they get into a debate about what constitutes American Studies: we are a field marked by a continuous history of methodological self-reflection. But I remain struck by this particular fray perhaps because it portrays a chief division that continues to characterize American Studies, perhaps because it dramatizes the chief philosophical difference between Iowa and our chief institutional rival, perhaps because it still haunts the field as we move through a larger paradigm shift that redefines the U.S. within globalization concerns and necessitates the synthesis of theory and history in general intellectual judgments.

Perhaps, most importantly, my convictions about the strength and important future of American Studies are coming into play — and being rewarded — this fall on a daily basis. Living in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy and the threat of impending war, undergraduate students here are taking my course in American Studies methods (required for majors) as an elective because they seek ways to understand the purposes and meanings of the society in which they live. More than 300 students are currently enrolled in our introductory American Values class, now that we have switched it to a large lecture and discussion section format. The new arrangement has initially met with great success and the ability to (almost) meet a large demand. In addition, we are currently in the beginning stages of hiring a new Assistant Professor of American Studies, an important occasion that allows one to look toward the future of the department and the field in general. Perhaps, I am also anticipating 2003’s year-long departmental review, a regular process that every department undergoes every seven years.

It just *feels* like a moment of looking ahead and renewing our course. The *icing on the cake* to that feeling, of course — speaking of food — is that the American Studies cookbook is now in production. It represents the fun side of integrating one’s passions into American Studies scholarship. The cookbook, both fundraiser and end result of our Cooking in America graduate proseminar (which ended on October 29), is not only a compendium of GREAT recipes but the product of a rich blend of scholarly resources at Iowa, creative interests and historical interpretations, amateurs’ activities and minor

obsessions, and that special ingredient unique to American Studies known as the "flake factor!" (Be sure to check out the cookbook order form on the back of this newsletter.)



**James Hall (PhD '92)** has been appointed director of the New College program at the University of Alabama. The New College emphasizes individually initiated

learning experiences in an interdisciplinary setting. Students design their own areas of study, which typically include several academic disciplines, in consultation with their faculty advisers.

**Alison Kibler (PhD '94)** "moved back to the US in July after living in Canberra Australia for five years. I feel very fortunate to have landed a job in American studies and women's studies at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. Lots of interdisciplinary teaching in a pleasant historic city, close to extended family in DC and research in New York City. Next semester I'm teaching "Introduction to American Studies" for the first time since I taught it at Iowa as a graduate student. It brings back lots of good memories. Still at work on "Paddy, Shylock and Sambo Irish, Jewish and African American Protests against Mass Culture."

**Natalie Robertson (PhD '96)** has been listed in the 2002 edition of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*. This is the second time that Dr. Robertson has received the honor, the first listing occurring in 2000. Only the top 2% of teachers achieve such level of recognition in that publication.

Dr. Robertson is also the recipient of a Faculty Research Award from the National Endowment For The Humanities. The award will allow her to conduct field and archival research in southwestern and central Nigeria for two consecutive summers. Dr. Olutayo Adesina, Head of the Department of History at the University of Ibadan, has invited Dr. Robertson to collaborate with him and his colleagues in the production of Robertson's forthcoming book on a case of slave smuggling. Beyond her own professional goals in Nigeria, Dr. Robertson aims to establish an academic foundation for escorting students to Nigeria to teach them how to conduct field research and to teach them how to serve as cultural ambassadors while they are researching and residing in a west African country.

**Eric Sandeen (PhD '77)** is the Mary C. Turpie Award winner for 2002. Given by The American Studies Association, the Award is given to the candidate who has demonstrated outstanding abilities and achievement in American Studies teaching, advising, and program development at the local or regional level. Named for the late Mary C. Turpie, cofounder, chair, and for many years, the guiding force behind the American Studies Program at the University of Minnesota, the prize is awarded periodically at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association and includes life-time membership in the ASA for the recipient. Previous winners include Robert A. Gross, Jesper Rosenmeier, Simon Bronner, Jay Mechling, Lois Rudnick, Michael Aaron Rockland, Alma Payne, Richard Slotkin, Paul Baker, and Charles Bassett.

Sandeen also received the Internationalization award from the University of Wyoming this year. This award is given to one faculty member each year to acknowledge efforts to internationalize the campus.

**Nan Wolverton (PhD '94)** presented a paper titled *Maintaining the 'well-kept petticoat of New England society' Indian Makers of Baskets and Other Crafts* at a symposium hosted by Old Sturbridge Village in partnership with the New England Native American Institute in October. She has had a piece on New England Native American basketry accepted by *The Magazine Antiques* for publication next year.



**Jane Desmond** was chosen to represent the U.S. American Studies Association at the meetings of the Japanese Association for American Studies at Meiji University in Tokyo last June.

Travelling with ASA president George Sanchez and Josh Brown, director of the American Social History Workshop, she presented papers in Tokyo and Kyoto at several different universities and met with graduate students and faculty on many campuses. This was a great opportunity to find out more about what Japanese scholars are concentrating on and how their graduate student training is structured.

She also recently signed a contract with the University of Chicago Press for a new book tentatively titled Displaying Death/Animating Life which will contrast the after-death treatment of human and animal bodies. A part of that new book "Pet Cemeteries and Mourning Practices" was delivered as a paper in August in London at the very interesting meetings of the International Society for Anthrozoology which consists of philosophers, literary scholars, wildlife historians, animal behavior specialists, and anthropologists working on animal/human interactions. Having recently adopted a dog, she is bringing her research on the animal/human bond home, and would also like to bring this "research" into the office, but campus rules unfortunately prohibit multiple species occupation of office space.

Finally, having just been appointed North American editor for the new journal Comparative American Studies to be published starting in 2003 by Sage Publishers, she'd like to invite colleagues to submit papers for the journal. A full copy of the call for papers is available on the Sage website.

**Rich Horwitz** reports that all is well and relays his regards to everyone.

He has been pleased to hear from Iowa folks, though he doesn't understand why so many keep on referring to his "retirement." He wants everyone to know that, yes, he is very much enjoying a return to a part of the country where he grew up. That does include lots of leisure pursuits -- fishing in the ocean near his house, serving on the racing crew for two sailboats (43' sloops -- and winning a fair number of races, he says), frequenting the East Bay bike path, playing Celtic sessions in Irish pubs a couple of nights per week, and consuming mass quantities of seafood. He has even recovered enough from lingering "Buckner trauma" to ride the T up to a Red Sox game or two.

But he is also working very full-time on several research and writing contracts. His main job is through his position as a Senior Fellow of the Coastal Institute in Narragansett (which is affiliated with the Graduate School of Oceanography of the University of Rhode Island). In one year (supposedly working 60% time -- "but you know how that goes") he is developing two response plans, one for a team of environmental scientists to participate in assessing the damage of potential oil spills off the state's shore and the other for the RI Department of Environmental Management, writing its "all-hazard emergency response plan" (i.e., how to use the combined

strength of the 550 men and women of that agency, if there should be a major emergency, such as a hurricane, release of toxic materials, explosion, act of terrorism, etc.) Of course, he admits that he started out knowing very little about DEM, emergencies, or response, but he is delighted that the agency wanted it that way. They wanted an outsider who would be quick to pick up on cultural resources within the agency and to write about them in a clear, plain style. So, basically, he says, he spends a lot of time hanging out with people in forestry, parks and rec, commercial fishing, US Coast Guard, and what not, learning what they do best and explaining it to the powers that be. So far, he's found putting some of it into the lingo of "Incident Command" challenging, but a lot easier than Chinese. "Right up my alley," he says. His second major contract is with a law firm that specializes in product liability litigation. They are funding (at least for one year -- and "off-the-academic chart pay scale" he adds) his development as an "Awareness Expert" -- basically reviewing historical records to establish what sorts of risks might have been "common knowledge" at particular times and in particular places in the U.S. "It's actually pretty mainstream American Studies," he says. He also just got back from about a week out in Montana, where he is now a consultant for a large NSF-funded "biocomplexity" grant -- aiming to model comprehensively the dynamic relations among various species of plants and animals, the earth, and the climate (e.g., what affects the size and health of the elk herd?) in the Northern Yellowstone Range. "The team includes the world's experts on aspen, wolves, elk, frogs . . . I am the 'people' guy." Rich has also been appointed a "Visiting Scholar" in American Civilization at Harvard and Brown, though he says these appointments are more a courtesy (and a route to library privileges) than anything else.

Bottom line: he wants folks to know that he is busy, gainfully employed, and very involved in what he considers very much in-line with the field. Noni and Carl are also doing fine. Noni is still doing physical therapy, but now through VNS in Portsmouth, providing home PT. And Carl is teaching math (mainly AP courses) at an independent high school in St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. (So you know where they'll be going for winter break!)

In the meantime, Rich welcomes staying in touch. You can reach him at 19 Joann Drive, Barrington, RI 02806-2260 or call (401) 874-6869 or write rhorwitz@cox.net

**Kim Marra** presented a paper entitled "Lesbian Scholar/Gay Subject Turn-of-the-Century Inversions" and was a speaker on a roundtable entitled "Theatre

Historiography--the Last Fifteen Years" at the 2002 Association for Theatre in Higher Education Conference in San Diego in August. She is preparing to team teach a new course with Jane Desmond, "Performing America Queerly: Histories of Sexuality on and off the Stage," in Spring 2003.

**Laura Rigal** has been on leave this fall, the second year of her Faculty Scholar award. She has been working on her book Rivers of Light: Visual Literacy, the Science of Motion, and the Enlightenment Sources of American Power, 1745-1875. She will be at the ASA meeting in Houston, Nov. 14-16, on the panel "Vision, Visuality and Commerce in Nineteenth Century America, 1800-1850," and will be chairing the panel "Grave Matters: Digging for History in Nineteenth-Century America" at the OAH annual meeting in Memphis, April 3-6. Laura is always on the lookout for books that will illuminate the field of American Studies, especially eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American Studies, and she has several new titles to recommend:

Jill Lepore, A is For American Letters and Other Characters in the Newly National United States (New York Knopf, 2002)

Leigh Eric Schmidt, Hearing Things Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment (Harvard University Press, 2000)

Shelly Streeby, American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture (University of California Press, 2002)

## *Congratulations*

**Congratulations** to the fall semester winners of the Kern Travel Awards. **Kristin Solli** received \$250 to support her presentation of a paper at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. Her paper, "*Not just a store: The Cultural Work of Selling Music*" was part of a session called "Places/Spaces."

**Barbara Shubinski** will receive the same amount to present her paper, "Edward Weston's Vision of Walt Whitman's America: The Much Unsung *Leaves of Grass* Project" as part of an all-Iowa session at the ASA meeting in Houston. The panel is led by John Raeburn, and includes panelists James C. Hall (PhD '92) and Jane Simonsen (PhD '01).

**Jennifer Pustz** has been awarded a \$500 Kern Dissertation Travel Award

**Michael Lewis (PhD '00)** "announces the birth of Simon Reed Lewis on October 13th, at 12:02 am. He is a bright eyed, dark-haired (for the moment, anyway) little boy. Simon and Cass are both doing very well. We have tried to look at the Rorschach blot that is his face and see traces of ancestors past, with no luck thus far (aren't all babies' faces like tea leaves?). But he sure is cute!"

**Megan Nelson** successfully defended her dissertation! "Help Wanted: The Interpretation of Domestic Servants in the Era of Social History." She'll use the award to help support research in Maymont, Williamsburg, and Monticello, Virginia.

### **CORRECTION**

Catherine Clabby's information was inadvertently omitted in the Special Edition newsletter containing MA recipients. She received her MA in 1996, and currently resides in Durham, NC, where she works at the Reporter, News and Observer. Her email address is cclabby@aol.com

Our apologies for this oversight.

## Meet Our New Students

**Katie Dunham** received her undergraduate degree in English from the University of Nebraska. Originally from Pleasant Dale, NE, she chose Iowa for graduate studies because "Iowa City is a great community, relatively close to home, and the American Studies program seemed like a perfect fit." For the past five years Katie has worked for the Gallup Organization doing public opinion polls. When not studying, she loves going to movies.

**Rixa Anne Spencer Freeze**, from Rochester, MN, has a BA in American Studies from Brigham Young University, and an MA in American History from Ohio University, along with graduate certificates in Contemporary History and Women's Studies. She says she has "way too many intellectual interests for her own good," but among them she counts women's history and issues; food and culture; and environmental history. Interesting facts about Rixa: she ran a study abroad program in France, and has played the violin since age 5 (even majored in it for a while). She came to Iowa because she couldn't get enough of those cornfields! (really, though, it's close to home and a great place to live.) When she's not studying, she plays with her Dalmatian, Zeke, and fixes up their old house with her husband Eric.

**Brian Hallstoos** left his heart in the Twin Cities, although he hasn't lived there for awhile. With a BA in History from the University of Minnesota-Morris, and an MA in art history from Rutgers, Brian came to Iowa after spending three and a half years as an archivist at the Des Moines Art Center. He considers himself fortunate to have found a program that suits his interests at an excellent institution that is within the general proximity of his wife's job. His interests lie in 19th and 20th-century visual representation of race and music; and southern history since Reconstruction. When not studying, he likes to peruse used book stores; collect his thoughts on long, brisk walks; abuse his body on the basketball court; rock out to *formerly* hip music; and play with his son, Tatum.

**Erica Marie Hannickel** hails from Rocklin, CA (near Sacramento). She received degrees from the University of California-San Diego (BA in Ethnic Studies) and Cal State-Fullerton (MA in American Studies). She has many interests, including theories of cultural change and identity; the built environment; nature/culture; postcolonial theory; visual studies/theory; literature and the

imagination; and international views of the US. She and her fiancée, Brad, came to Iowa for many reasons, mainly the quality and caliber of the program and professors. They like the size and friendliness of the program and the university, plus it's a whole new area of the country and culture for them to explore. Erica has worked at Random House, Entrepreneur magazine, and Prima publishing for several years, in addition to the occasional craft store and cross-country ski resort! When not studying, she enjoys gardening, hiking, biking, watching sci-fi, vegetarian cooking (watch for her recipes in the AS cookbook), and reading current fiction.

**Hyun Il Park** is from Seoul, Republic of Korea. He has degrees from Seoul National University and Korea Military Academy (a college-level institution comparable to the US Military Academy at West Point). He has interests in literature and film. Currently he is a captain in the Korean Army. He decided to pursue graduate work at the University of Iowa on the recommendation of one of his professors, who is an alumnus of UI. When not studying, he enjoys tennis and swimming.

**Danielle Rich** moved to Iowa City from Washington, DC, where she received her BA in American Studies from George Washington University. Danielle's research interests are gender and sexual identities. She has been an intern at the National Building Museum. When not in class or studying, she enjoys movies, reading novels, and watching TV.

**Deanna Sue Thomann** is a product of the University of Iowa, receiving her BA in English and Journalism. She hopes to learn more about the changes in agriculture in the American Midwest and the cultural implications of such changes. Having grown up on a farm (she's from Riverside, IA), it's a topic near and dear to her. This past summer, Deanna was hired by the City of Iowa City to write and design a booklet for the Iowa Avenue Literary Walk. It was her job to write brief bios for those writers featured in the Walk, which comprises a series of plaques similar to those in Hollywood. With her free time, she enjoys taking long, rural road trips and attending outdoor blues concerts. She also babies her two cats, Basil and Plum.

# Floating Fridays

**November 8**

**AUTHORS' ROUNDTABLE THE INVISIBLE MAN TURNS 50**

*Horace Porter*, Chair of African American World Studies  
*Lawrence Jackson*, Assistant Professor of English at  
Howard University

*Jerry Watts*, Associate Professor of American Studies  
and Political Science, Trinity College

**December 6**

Robyn Wiegman (Margaret Taylor Smith  
Director of Women's Studies & Associate Professor of  
Women's Studies, Duke University). "Workshop: The  
Futures of American Studies."



**Carlton College** seeks applicants for two tenure-track positions: Assistant Professor of Restoration/eighteenth-century British literature; and Assistant professor of colonial

and nineteenth-century American literature. Contact Constance Walker, Chair, Department of English (507-646-4322) for more information. **Deadline November 15, 2002.**

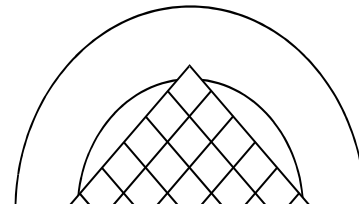
**University of Alabama** invites applications for an entry-level, tenure track position in the Department of American Studies. Contact Professor James Salem, Chair, Department of American Studies. **Review will begin January 6, 2003.**

**University of California-Davis** seeks assistant/associate professor in Asian American Studies. Contact Darrell Hamamoto (dyhamamoto@ucdavis.edu) for more information. **Deadline 1/10/03.**

**University of Iowa** seeks an assistant professor of American Studies. **Review began October 15, 2002.** Please contact John Raeburn for further information.

## ALUMNI

We'd love to hear what you're doing, where you're living/teaching, what you're publishing and/or writing, interesting events in your life. Please take a moment to drop us an email (laurakastens@uiowa.edu) and we'll include your news in the next newsletter.



### American Studies Department

*Faculty:*

Lauren Rabinovitz, Chair  
Susan Birrell  
Jane Desmond  
Richard Horwitz (on leave)  
Rob Latham  
Mary Ellen Lennon (visiting)  
Kim Marra  
John Raeburn  
Laura Rigal

*Staff:*

Carrie Louvar  
Laura Kastens  
(newsletter editor)

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## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

**The Mid-American Studies Association and the Great Lakes American Studies Association announce:**

**Joint Conference of MAASA and GLASA  
Friday, April 11 and Saturday, April 12, 2003  
The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA**

MAASA/GLASA invite proposals for 20-minute paper presentations on all research topics relevant to American Studies. Proposals are also welcome for complete panels and for workshops on interdisciplinary areas of research and teaching in American Studies as well as on museums and archives.

For each proposal, please submit:

Name

Address, Telephone number, and e-mail address

Institutional affiliation

Title of Paper

250-word proposal

Brief biographical note

If you are proposing a complete panel or workshop, please indicate the name and particulars of the chair and respondents (if any).

Send to:

Prof. Lauren Rabinovitz, Program Chair

American Studies Department

701 Jefferson Building

University of Iowa

Iowa City, IA 52242

Fax: 319-335-0314

**NO E-MAIL SUBMISSIONS**

**DEADLINE: JANUARY 15, 2003**

Notification of acceptances will be made by February 1, 2003. Complete conference registration, housing, and travel information will be mailed at that time.

2003 Program Committee for the MAASA/GLASA Conference:

Lauren Rabinovitz, Chair; University of Iowa

Kathryn Kuhn, St. Louis University

Judith Yaross Lee, Ohio University

Grad Student Reps: Eleanor McConnell, University of Iowa  
Jonathan Hansen, University of Iowa

Contact: Lauren Rabinovitz, American Studies Department, University of Iowa, 319-335-0320, lauren-rabinovitz@uiowa.edu

*Pre-order your cookbook*

**The American Studies Cookbook will be completed and mailed in time for delivery on or about December 15, 2002.**

American Studies Department  
701 Jefferson Bldg.  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, IA 52242



Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of **The American Studies Cookbook** at **\$14.95** per copy, plus \$2 shipping and handling for each book ordered. [All profits from the American Studies Cookbook will benefit American Studies, The University of Iowa Foundation.] **Enclosed is my check or money order for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.** PLEASE MAKE CHECKS OUT TO: American Studies Cookbook.

Mail my cookbooks to:

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Orders will only be shipped prepaid. Shipments outside the continental US can only be shipped 4<sup>th</sup> class, which can add 4-5 weeks to the shipping time.

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