DEAR FRIENDS, STUDENTS, AND ALUMNI OF AMERICAN STUDIES,

Doing American Studies outside the United States might not seem like an obvious way to approach our field, but, according to Joseph Lam, an undergraduate here at the University of Texas, it’s a worthwhile method. Joseph was one of seventeen UT undergrads who studied comparative urbanism and cultural memory with me this summer in Vienna, Austria. What Joseph meant by this, apart from the unmistakable benefits of living in arguably the world’s most livable city, became clear during our many long conversations. “The United States looks kind of different from over here,” he once remarked to me, while another student said, “I think our cities could learn a few things from this place.” The peculiar qualities of American cities, from automobile dependency to memorializing the past, stood in sharp relief when seen alongside alternate ways of making urban places. After a class discussion with a group of students from the University of Vienna at the MuseumsQuartier—a discussion marked by competing understandings of consumerism, heritage preservation, capitalism, national pride, and urban space—Joseph put it simply: “College is awesome!”

Without realizing it, Joseph and his classmates were making a statement central to debates about the future of higher education. They might not have read Louis Menand’s recent article in the New Yorker, “Live and Learn: Why We Have College,” but they enthusiastically endorsed one of his central points, namely that higher education is important, in part, because it “exposes future citizens to material that enlightens and empowers them, whatever careers they end up choosing.” I suspect that readers of Main Currents would find such a sentiment self-evident; I certainly do. With Menand, I believe that it’s essential to help our students “acquire the knowledge and skills important for life as an informed citizen, or as a reflective and culturally literate human being.” There are many forms that this effort takes and in this issue you’ll read about faculty, students, and alumni of American Studies who are committed to this mission.

This is a group of scholars who have published six books this year and many influential articles and book chapters. Our faculty have won awards for these efforts, including the Robert Hamilton Grand Book Prize for the best book published by a UT faculty member and the Most Significant Scholarly Book Award from the Texas Institute of Letters. They’ve received prestigious fellowships this year, including ones from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program. Such scholarly excellence extends to our students, both graduate and undergraduate. Three graduate students, a nearly unprecedented number, received our university’s most prestigious research fellowship, and one received University’s Excellence in Graduate Research Award. They’ve been awarded fellowships from such sources as Stanford University and the American Studies Association, and they’ve published books, journal articles, and chapters at an electrifying rate. Five undergraduate students completed honor’s theses last year and three participated in the Intellectual Entrepreneurship mentoring program, where they worked with our graduate students on their own research projects and attended research conferences. Scholarship and teaching entwine in American Studies; each relies on the other for its depth, its rigor, and its clarity. It’s no wonder that my colleagues received recognition for this mutually-supportive work, including the 2010 President’s...
Associates Teaching Excellence Award; the 2010 Silver Spurs Teaching Award (a student nominated and student selected award); and the 2011 ING Professor Excellence Award. According to the executive vice president of ING, a global financial institution, his company’s award “expresses our appreciation for educators who are dedicated to helping students reach their full potential, preparing them to compete in the global society.”

It’s important to recognize that this holistic vision of higher education is threatened. In Texas, some state leaders are promoting a business-style, market-driven approach that would treat students as customers (not informed citizens or reflective human beings); that would diminish research that isn’t directly profitable; and that would fundamentally change UT’s status as a top-tier university in which research and teaching are inextricably linked. (The College of Liberal Arts has written a response to this approach, which you might wish to read: http://7solutionsresponse.org/)

Such an approach would undermine the very activity celebrated by the ING corporation: namely, teaching students to think critically and expansively in ways that prepares them for the unexpected challenges of living and working in an ever-more complex, globalized world. While there was no way to know for certain how Joseph Lam and his classmates were going to use what they studied in Vienna—he hopes eventually to work in the field of urban planning—the class opened countless doors to the sort of thoughtful reflection that can only happen during these critical college years. It’s the reason that college is, indeed, awesome.
Contents

Feature Stories

MARK SMITH 1

LEAH FINNEGAN 9

NAOMI PAIK 3

CARLY KOCUREK 11

MATT HEDSTROM 5

REBECCA ONION 13

ANGIE MAXWELL 7

KRISTIN THOMPSON 15
Faculty News

Robert Abzug 17
Cary Cordova 17
Janet Davis 17
Elizabeth Engelhardt 17
Neil Foley 18
Steven Hoelscher 19
Randy Lewis 19
Nhi Lieu 20
Stephen Marshall 20
Jeff Meikle 21
Julia Mickenberg 21
A. Naomi Paik 22
Mark Smith 22
Shirley Thompson 22

Graduate Student News 23

Undergraduate Student News 28

Supporting American Studies 30
“...I knew that the United States and Finland had the only cases of national Prohibition in western culture, had it at exactly the same time, and had all of the same problems...”
GREETINGS FROM SUNNY FINLAND—well actually snowy Finland. I spent last academic year as the Fulbright Chair of American Studies in the North American Studies Program at the University of Helsinki. I am the fourth representative of UT’s American Studies Department to occupy this position, following Bob Crunden, Al Crosby, and Jeff Meikle. My academic duties were much more varied than at Texas. At the University I taught one lecture class of about 80 students and a 15 person seminar each semester. The lecture courses have been variations of our Introduction to American Studies and the second half of Main Currents.

A good number of my students were Europeans on the Erasmus Program, which allows students from any European university to attend another. Students from across Europe like Helsinki but, of course, lack Finnish so seek out English language classes. I also had Asian and African students, all of which had forced me to look at my subjects in very different ways. Teaching represented only part of my duties. I gave eleven public lectures with audiences ranging from high school students from twelve different international schools throughout eastern Europe to teachers of high school English from Helsinki to close to the Arctic Circle. Being the representative of American Studies in the country, I have been expected and have given lectures on many different aspects of American culture including religion and education. I have also taken an active role in Finland’s Fulbright Program.

Finland is unique in that it contributes equal money to the Program and thus can bring and send far more students proportionally than other nation. I was on the selection committee of Finnish students to the United States and ran sessions on the expectations of American graduate programs to the recipients. When I was there, I discovered a new and exciting research topic. I knew that the United States and Finland had the only cases of national Prohibition in western culture, had it at exactly the same time, and had all of the same problems; I assumed that their attitudes and policy toward alcohol were the same. In fact, especially after Prohibition, they were near opposites. I have given several lectures on their differences, am working on two articles, and hope to write a monograph on their comparative temperance histories. I got as much done on the Finnish situation as I could while there.

The travel is the best part, of course. We have been throughout the country including—at the insistence of our 19 year daughter—north of the Arctic Circle to the home of the only true Santa Claus, where he speaks ten different languages and all the kids outside the US sends their letters (Santa Claus Finland). We have also been to Estonia a number of times, Sweden (where we ran into Siva on the Stockholm subway), and Italy to warm up, Paris and Bulgaria.
A FEW SHORT MONTHS after deciding to leave fabulous Lubbock, Texas for New York City to attend college, a massive student strike occupied the central administration building of my future institution, forcing the university president to leave his office via underground tunnels while escorted by campus security. The culmination of a long series of frustrated attempts to negotiate with the administration, hundreds of students engaged in this act of civil disobedience to demand the establishment of Ethnic Studies. At the time I was clueless. All I wanted was to get to NYC ASAP. I had no idea that the protesters were summarily threatened with arrest and expulsion or that their core organizers engaged in a hunger strike resulting in their hospitalization, but also in the success of their struggle. I had no idea what Ethnic Studies was or why it was important. By the time I graduated, I had fully benefited from these students’ audacity. Two of my college mentors, who even today inspire and push me, were the first professor and the first director of the Ethnic Studies program hired as a result of the strikes. Along with other faculty and students, they challenged me to see how social formations like racism, patriarchy, and nationalism were constitutive of U.S. society, law, politics, history, and culture. With the interpretive tools they encouraged, I saw how histories of slavery, imperialism, global disparities in wealth, labor exploitation, and the resistance movements they have generated are as much a part of the United States’ heritage as its venerated principles of democracy, freedom, and justice. And while American Studies was instituted at my alma mater specifically to undermine Ethnic Studies, I believe these fields are most productive when they converge and work synergistically together, as they do here at UT. As I see it, the critical thinking fostered by American Studies and Ethnic Studies have become absolutely necessary as crises ranging from financial collapse and dire poverty to global warfare and environmental destruction become part of the everyday reality we must confront.

My research focuses on one such site of permanent crisis—the United States’ practices of incarceration in prison camps both within and outside its territorial borders. I examine how the U.S. state produces conditions of “rightlessness” by focusing on three sets of such rightless subjects: Japanese American internees seeking redress, HIV+ Haitian refugees once held at Guantánamo, and “enemy combatants” of the War on Terror. My research considers how the United States, as the world’s most powerful nation-state, can at once be hailed as a leader of rights discourses, via both Civil Rights and human rights, yet also produce multiple forms of rightlessness. While I examine the historical and legal conditions that lead the U.S. to repeatedly turn to camps and imprisonment, I look to the testimonies of rightless subjects in legal and cultural texts like affidavits and depositions, as well as films, theatre, and poetry. Through their individual and collective stories, rightless people themselves have created an archive of histories, cultures, political formations, and other situated knowledges that I believe can help us figure out how to arrest and transform the politics and processes that have lead to their dehumanization.

As we move deeper into the 21st century, it’s becoming increasingly clear to me that we live in dangerous times, marked not just by the permanence of sites like Guantánamo in our political landscape. We live in times when global warfare comprises the backdrop of our everyday lives, when the racial profiling of people who “look undocumented” is legalized, when the United States imprisons more than 2 million people and has the highest incarceration rates in the world. In this same moment, the critical thinking that is fostered in education are under duress from the corporatization of the university, attacks on freedom of speech and thought, and outright legal bans on Ethnic Studies. It seems clear to me that the kinds of critical thinking that takes place in our classrooms are ever more important. At stake is our very democracy and future.
“As I see it, the critical thinking fostered by American Studies and Ethnic Studies have become absolutely necessary as crises ranging from financial collapse and dire poverty to global warfare and environmental destruction become part of the everyday reality we must confront.”
“I was drawn to American Studies for graduate study precisely because I thought its defining interdisciplinarity might offer wider horizons and larger fields of vision.”
WHEN I THINK BACK ON GRADUATE SCHOOL, what I value most about my time in American Studies at Texas was the freedom the program allowed me to be productively naive. That phrase—productively naive—has been rattling around in my head lately as I begin to mentor graduate students myself. Graduate education, like so much of university life, is caught up in the push to assess and measure, but my experience as a graduate student reminds me that, ultimately, graduate education is about intellectual formation and discovery, and sometimes that process takes the form of wandering. American Studies let me wander in productive ways.

I came to graduate school full of curiosity and ambition but with very little sense of what I wanted to study in any disciplined way, and with absolutely no sense of the questions that would shape my academic career (or even, to be fair, that I would ever have an academic career.) As a History major at Haverford College, a small liberal arts school, I was educated in a department with only two Americanists, and my education as a result, though very solid in many ways, was also rather narrow. I was drawn to American Studies for graduate study precisely because I thought its defining interdisciplinarity might offer wider horizons and larger fields of vision. So I took courses in grad school that ranged across cultural, social, and intellectual history, literature, anthropology, sociology, and religion. As an undergraduate, I had taken only one course in Religious Studies, during my final semester, but it was coursework in the sociology and history of American religion that most captivated me as a graduate student. No one in the department cautioned that the study of religion—and especially my growing interest in the popularization of Protestant and post-Protestant liberalism through mass-market books, which became the subject of my dissertation—might not serve me well professionally in American Studies, though that might have been sensible advice. Eventually I discovered that the questions that animated my interest in the study of religion did in fact speak to larger issues in American Studies, though that might have been sensible advice. Eventually I discovered that the questions that animated my interest in the study of religion did in fact speak to larger issues in American Studies, and I learned how to articulate those connections. But that took some time, through grad school and two postdocs. I am now thrilled to have a joint appointment in American Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. The questions I began to formulate at Texas have shaped these early phases of my career: What is the history of “spiritual but not religious”? Where have our common vocabularies of self and spirit come from? How has consumerism shaped religious thought and practice? To these questions in a next project, I’ll add another: how and why and to what effect have American seekers crossed the color line in search of religious authenticity?

As I have engaged with scholars in Religious Studies, History, and elsewhere, I have become more and more convinced that the right place for my intellectual formation was American Studies. The study of religion, after all, fulfills one of the central missions of American Studies, as Steve Hoelscher articulated so well in the last issue of this newsletter. “Keep American Studies Weird,” Steve urged, and nothing is simultaneously more high and more low, more ordinary and more weird than religion. For many in the academy, religion remains an embarrassment, a pre-modern vestige, the country bumpkin of modernity. It is worse than superstition—it is kitsch, an affront to evolved sensibilities. This embarrassment has proven especially acute for Americanists given the pervasive religiosity of American life. But who better than scholars in American Studies to embrace, wonder about, interrogate, and ultimately dignify with our attention the illegitimate, the coarsely popular, the marginal, the weird? American Studies at Texas allowed me to ask this terribly naive question, and to make a career of it.
IN WILLIE MORRIS’S MEMOIR, *North Toward Home*, the University of Texas at Austin, is sandwiched between a Mississippi childhood and a “real life” in New York—an intellectual pit stop of sorts, complete with breakfast tacos and live music. I arrived in Austin sight unseen with a dog-eared copy of Morris’s recollections in the back of my jeep. My first semester, I walked the gauntlet of classes taught by Shelley Fisher-Fishkin, William Goetzman, and Elspeth Rostow. They took no prisoners, especially Rostow, who could tell instantly by the look on your face that you had not completed your weekly reading and thus would call on you in class without hesitation. She penalized you one letter grade for splitting an infinitive, and her red pen was heavy. She taught me to think before I spoke and to think even longer before I wrote. When the first semester ended, I still could not define American Studies. I had applied for the program at the eleventh hour. Suffocated by sensible options like law school, I grabbed a pamphlet about a study abroad program in Scotland that featured classes in “American Studies.” I googled the term and one of the hits was the newly renovated website of the Texas program, complete with classic photographs of Americana and a picture of Garrison Hall. The site mentioned no specific prerequisites for applying (I had majored in international relations and Middle East studies as an undergraduate), and the deadline was still one month away. That story used to embarrass me. How could anyone make such a major decision in such a superficial manner? Here’s the truth: I jumped off a cliff. Which is exactly what American Studies is, in my opinion, and it is exactly what it requires of us. It is as messy and frustrating as it is rich and dynamic. And I know now that my inability to define the field actually reflected my growing understanding of that complexity, rather than a sustained ignorance.

I suspect that the reflection of graduate school in the rear-view mirror is rose colored for many of us, especially when you have a tenure-track position. But I felt encouraged in the American Studies Department at the University of Texas—encouraged by Steve Hoelscher and Julia Mickenberg to tackle big ideas with hard work and discipline. Perseverance and several hundred letters of recommendation landed me a job at the University of Arkansas in the Diane D. Blair Center of Southern Politics and Society housed in the Political Science Department. Though social science is a steep cliff, my degree in American Studies—particularly our penchant for questioning methods and assumptions—has prepared me quite well for my current research project. My Blair Center colleagues and I received a grant from the Rockefeller Institute to launch the Blair-Rockefeller Poll, a national post-election poll that will include, for the first time, an oversample of southerners, African Americans, and Latinos. Whereas many political scientists who write about the South are forced to piece together state data or rely on national surveys with few southern participants, this poll and the resulting findings will finally allow a true South and non-South comparison on everything from identity construction to race relations and policy preferences. At stake is a reconsideration of the entire premise of southern distinctiveness that underscores much that is written about the region in every discipline. It could take a lifetime to sort out the implications of such a project. So my copy of Morris’s inspiring tale and all of my countless binders of comps notes and dissertation research are home here in Fayetteville for the foreseeable future. But the coffee cup on my desk is burnt orange.
“...Here’s the truth: I jumped off a cliff. Which is exactly what American Studies is, in my opinion, and it is exactly what it requires of us. It is as messy and frustrating as it is rich and dynamic.”
“...And eventually, when I found my stride working for The Daily Texan, I also discovered that my coursework gave me a lot to write about.”
IT’S NOT EASY BEING an American Studies major.

“So,” the conversations always begin. Then the eyes narrow, the head cocks to the right.

“What, exactly, do you do with an American Studies degree?”

I admit, it’s hard to say. Before graduating, my future job prospects varied with shifts in the winds. One day I would want to be a professor. The next, a poet. The next, a sculptor of synthetic materials (cardboard was my preferred medium). I anticipated a life rich in knowledge and poor in money and, well, that’s what I got; I ended up a journalist. But I’ll get to that later.

I moved to Texas on a lark when I was 21. I was a wayward student at a small liberal arts college in the woods of upstate New York, and I was bored. I wanted to travel, see a different part of the country. So I packed up my collection of mini cacti and drove to Austin, enrolling at UT. I originally called my move South an academic experiment. I was one of the five or so AMS majors at my old college, and I said going to Texas would count as my “study inbroad.” My plan: For two semesters, I would go to a school that was the opposite of the one I was attending—a place that was huge, public and in a red state—and see if I could hack it. Then I would return to my other college and write a thesis on comparative American universities.

Let’s just say Zora Neale Hurston I was not. I experienced more culture shock relocating to Texas than the summer I spent in France living with an elderly antiques dealer, the ghost of her dead husband and a poodle named Lalique. In Texas, men held doors open for me and librarians called me “little missy.” I spent most nights cowering in my tiny apartment, waiting for the sunset temperature drop that would enable me to function outdoors. I was in a perpetual—and ironic—state of culture shock.

In that sense, American Studies literally saved my sanity. Going to class was the one thing I looked forward to, and I made sure to sign up for the weirdest ones. Animals in American Culture, the Beats, Postmodern America, Wilderness and American Culture—I took them all. And eventually, when I found my stride working for The Daily Texan, I also discovered that my coursework gave me a lot to write about. Perhaps I pushed some editorial boundaries (and isolated myself further from my peers) by writing columns about doing benzadrine with Jack Kerouac, but what isn’t published these days?

I eventually ended up assimilating to Texas so well that I decided to stay (in anthropological terms, I went native). In the process, I obtained a double education—one of scholarship and one of self-discovery. The skills with which American studies equipped me,—which include, but are not limited to, rational analysis, encyclopedic knowledge of American history and correct usage of postmodernist terminology—proved fluid in and out of the classroom.

Fast forward three years and I’m now the editor of an entire section devoted to colleges at the Huffington Post. It’s a pretty crazy gig—I write about campus scandals, lascivious professors and university crises, from budget cuts to students behaving badly. I love my job, and suffice it to say if I hadn’t waged my ill-thought-out academic experiment of moving to Texas in the first place, I wouldn’t be doing it. But, after all, I’m an American Studies major. And what does that mean, anyway, besides thinking so far outside the box that you can’t even see it anymore?
I CAME TO MY GRADUATE STUDIES uncertain, as I’ve been assured repeatedly many people do. American Studies is a good field for uncertain people, a fact that Bill Stott, professor emeritus in American Studies at UT, has pointed out to me more than once. My studies in the AMS Department at UT have allowed me to a great extent to bask in that uncertainty – not to wallow or to idle in it, but to continue exploring a wide array of topics that excite and inspire me. That very process of exploration, some of it purposeful, some of it ultimately aimless, is what led me to my dissertation on the history of video gaming, and what has cultivated my interest and passion for American Studies scholarship.

I carried with me into graduate school my experience as a student journalist and freelance writer and editor. The subtleties of interviewing have always delighted me, and when Elizabeth Engelhardt’s class on American Foodways provided me with the opportunity to work on a project documenting Texas barbecue, I was thrilled – vegetarian or not. Around the same time, Sharon Strover, an affiliated faculty member for whom I was working as a research assistant, suggested to me an oral history of video gaming as a potential project. I had not thought much about video gaming as an academic subject, although I had invested much time studying blogging and online communities. Within a few weeks, I was down the proverbial rabbit hole, watching documentaries on video games, reading message boards run by gaming organizations, and tracking down books via used bookstores and Interlibrary Loan services.

At the same time that I was cutting my teeth as an oral historian at barbecue joints across central Texas, I began shaping a dissertation that would address the history not of early video games as machines, but of early video gaming as a cultural phenomenon. Since that point, my dissertation has evolved into a critical examination of video game arcades in the United States from 1972 to 1983. My research is focused on how media representations and practices associated with video gaming shaped and responded to economic and cultural shifts in the late 20th century.

Every conversation about my dissertation feels like a confession, and to some extent, it is one. While I study video games, and I can overwhelm almost anyone with bits of historical minutiae on the topic, I am bad — no terrible—at most games. When I began working on my dissertation, I made efforts to improve my skills, even buying an Atari 2600 on Ebay, along with a dozen or so vintage games. I’ve logged a lot of hours on that system, which I keep running with bent paperclips and good intentions, but I still spend most of my time playing shouting at the screen in language as colorful as the games’ pixilated graphics. To study a topic which forces me to grapple so intimately with my own lack of proficiency has helped keep me humble.

It has also reminded me that the best part of being in American Studies is knowing that I can go learn what I need, that no topic is off limits, and that my interests and my research can grow and evolve. At present, this means struggling to develop some limited skill with early video games; I certainly didn’t set out to study video gaming when I entered graduate school, but I surprised myself and became deeply invested in the topic. Once in a poetry workshop, an instructor told me that a good poem should surprise even the writer; it should turn into something other than what was planned. The best part of my work in American Studies at UT has been this kind of process as my research leads me to discover and learn about things that are often far removed from the path I thought I was taking.
“...It has also reminded me that the best part of being in American Studies is knowing that I can go learn what I need, that no topic is off limits, and that my interests and my research can grow and evolve.”
“My affinity for Whitman lies in his attempt to encompass all—to be the poet not of goodness only, but of wickedness also—and it’s this inclination toward abundance that brought me to American Studies in the first place...”
As a literature-loving high school student, I used Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* as the text for both my college admissions essay and my yearbook quote (“Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,/ Now I will you to be a bold swimmer”). In college, I carried Walt on countless hikes and foisted my copy on uninitiated friends; in the years between college and graduate school, I lived in Brooklyn, and thought of Walt and his ferry every time I took the Q train across the river into Manhattan.

My affinity for Whitman lies in his attempt to encompass all—to be the poet not of goodness only, but of wickedness also—and it’s this inclination toward abundance that brought me to American Studies in the first place, as a sophomore in college, coming straight out of an undergraduate literature major that left me feeling stifled. Suddenly, all of the things I was interested in naturally—the Patagonia catalogue, the Columbine killers, photographs of sharks—were essay fodder. I still feel this exhilarating emotional connection to the ambition and scope of our field on a daily basis, but for me, my time in graduate school has been about finding structure to rein in all of that interest. I became interested in figuring out what the common ground was between the topics that I gravitated toward: what, in other words, were my guiding questions?

During my MA coursework, and while reading for orals, I found that I was interested in the fields of childhood studies and science and technology studies because I wanted to know how people conceptualize, predict, and try to shape possible futures. As a person with a long-term interest in environmental issues, I wonder how attitudes toward the natural and technological worlds have evolved between generations.

My dissertation, a cultural history of popular scientific entertainments produced for American kids during the years 1890-1970, is a direct result of that narrowing of focus. As part of my ongoing process of dissertation definition, I started a blog, Songbirds and Satellites (www.rebeccaonion.com), to serve as a place for the thoughts, sources, and inquiries that just don’t fit into the bigger project. In recent years, as I research and write my dissertation, I’ve found that representing my project to funding agencies, archivists, and journal editors has been yet another way to create a structure that can contain all of the multitudes of questions and sources I’ve encountered.

Through interacting with archivists and curators at the Smithsonian, the Chemical Heritage Foundation, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Strong National Museum of Play, I have learned the critical importance of the well-framed question in the research process. And through applying for grants and fellowships, with the critical help of my dissertation advisors, Janet Davis and Julia Mickenberg, I’ve defined and redefined my dissertation’s purpose. In the end, for me, graduate school in American Studies has been about finding the discipline to harness abundance. I think—hope—old Walt would approve.
THE THOUGHT OF BEING in a foreign country for a month terrified me. I had never been away so long from my family, my friends, and the things that were familiar to me. Faster than I expected—indeed, the moment I stepped out of the airport and found myself immersed in a jungle of culture—many of my anxieties were erased. As an African American student, I found it challenging to let go of some of my preconceived notions of “Europeans.” I initially had my guard up. It wasn’t long before I realized that, despite the many cultural barriers that I faced in Europe, the Viennese taught me that if I were willing to learn about their culture, they, in return, would be willing to learn about me as well.

Vienna, in particular, is an especially interesting place to study. And one might add, it’s an amazing city to live in. I found myself with few moments of boredom because there are always things to indulge in: spontaneous wandering walks around the city, museums tours that included more history than my mind could consume, streets filled with friendly faces, and a city whose natural sounds were like a urban symphony.

Studying American urban history outside of the United States allowed my classmates and me to do some comparative analysis; America and Austria, Austin and Vienna, became entwined in our research. For example, we were critical of the Viennese tendency to forget their country’s complicity in the Holocaust, but then we realized that the American tendency to celebrate our history equally denies troubling moments of our own past. Historical exclusion is an important domestic educational issue, just as it is in international contexts.

As a civil engineering student, I found American Studies to be directly applicable to my field of studies. It was remarkable to be able to compare urban development and transportation infrastructure in a foreign country and assess the resulting social structure. My research project on the development of Vienna’s amazing subway system taught me a great deal about one culture’s attempt to create urban infrastructure for the betterment of society. The perspective I gained while studying Viennese urbanism will undoubtedly aid me as I seek a career in urban development and planning in American cities.

The more my classmates and I became acquainted with Vienna’s unique culture, the more we sought ways to bring back small elements of it to the United States. This is one of the priceless aspects of studying abroad: the access to several different cultures that can be creatively fused with your own personal experiences. This opportunity allows for us to grow in ways that are not possible with a solely domestic education. The diversity of my American Studies classmates, in addition to our assimilation into our new international surroundings, shed new light on everything I took for granted. Of all the things that I learned while overseas, the most important lesson is this: openness and willingness to understand an unfamiliar culture will allow you to grow personally, emotionally, and intellectually.

The city itself was our classroom. I will never forget the six-hour, sixteen-mile hike through the Vienna Woods that I shared with my classmates. Had I known that the hike, which began at the south edge of the city and continued all the way to the north, was going to be so extensive, I’m not sure I would have done it. But there is no greater feeling than arriving home after hiking up and down grassy hills to see a rare lunar eclipse. These are the types of memories that Vienna provided for me, which I cherish the most and which I will keep with me until the day I am fortunate enough to return. Not only did this American Studies course allow me to diversify my degree plan at the University of Texas, but also it has taught me so much about people, culture, friendships, adaptability, acceptance, exploration, and adventure. Most of all, studying in Vienna taught me how to learn openly.
“It wasn’t long before I realized that, despite the many cultural barriers that I faced in Europe, the Viennese taught me that if I were willing to learn about their culture, they, in return, would be willing to learn about me as well.”
ROBERT H. ABZUG has been Director of the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies since 2007. His edition of William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience* is in press at Bedford/St. Martin’s and will be published in 2012. Finally, as of September 1, 2012, he will hold the Audre and Bernard Rapoport Regents Chair of Jewish Studies.

CARY CORDOVA was delighted to see her article, “The Mission in Nicaragua: San Francisco Poets Go To War,” appear in the new anthology, *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*. The publication has served as a prompt for participating in conference panels on transnational barrio politics at the University of Texas at Austin last fall, and in San Francisco at the Latin American Studies Association meeting next spring. She also is engaged in a new research project on the radical history and art patronage of Children’s Book Press, which she presented at the Latino Art Now! conference in Los Angeles and at the Jovita Gonzalez Memorial Lecture at UT Austin. In addition, she developed and taught three new classes: “American Disasters,” “Radical Latinos,” and “Latinidades: Communities, Markets, and Representations.” This past spring, she was honored with a graduate teaching award from the Center for Mexican American Studies. She also was the recipient of a CMAS summer research fellowship to pursue research on Latina bodies and food, part of which she hopes to present at the American Studies Association annual meeting this fall.

JANET DAVIS published two essays in 2010-2011 related to her ongoing research and consulting work on the American circus. The first is a catalog essay for the NEH-sponsored exhibition, “The Amazing Circus Poster,” which opened in February 2011 at the Cincinnati Art Museum and will show at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota in Fall 2011-Winter 2012. The second publication includes an essay and several free-form discussions in the new anthology, *Women and Circus*, from the Festival Novog Cirkusa in Zagreb, Croatia. Davis is nearing completion of a full draft of *The Gospel of Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America*, which will be published by Oxford University Press. In 2010-2011, Davis taught two thoroughly enjoyable new undergraduate seminars—an upper-division historical survey of American popular culture from 1682-present, and a new first-year seminar for Plan II on American animals, which includes an exploration of selected animals from around the UT campus—water snakes, turtles, great-tailed grackles, fire ants, rats, cats, bats, squirrels, and bees.

As the academic year begins, it is very exciting to have ELIZABETH ENGELHARDT’S new book, *A Mess of Greens: Southern Gender and Southern Food*, in hand after many years of work. Female moonshiners, beaten biscuit crusaders, tomato club girls, strike novelists, curb market women, and market bulletin seed savers all are ready to make their reentrance to our academic conversations (University of Georgia Press, September 2011). Elizabeth Engelhardt has also been busy editing an anthology with her colleagues...
John T. Edge and Ted Ownby over at University of Mississippi and the Southern Foodways Alliance on southern foodways methodologies; it will be the first volume explicitly to discuss the scholarly tools that have developed in this maturing field of study. Both book projects dovetail with her work establishing and shepherding Foodways Texas into existence (please see www.foodwaystexas.com). An umbrella organization dedicated to the preservation, documentation, and celebration of the diverse foodways of the state, Foodways Texas is headquartered in the Division for Diversity and Community Education here at the University of Texas. The organization has cooperative relationships with the other main universities in the state, and its gatherings include scholars, food professionals, journalists, and food devotees. This year the oral history, film, and grant writing divisions will really get off the ground, so expect to hear more from Foodways Texas and American Studies in the form of partnerships and opportunities.

NEIL FOLEY was awarded the Texas Institute of Letters, Most Significant Scholarly Book Award of 2011, for *Quest for Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity* (Harvard, 2010). In 2011, the Huffington Post named *Quest for Equality* one of the “Best Social and Political Awareness Books” published in 2010. He has also presented a paper titled “‘The Greatest (Mexican) Generation’: Mexican Immigrant Draftees in the U.S. Army and the Challenge to U.S.-Mexico Diplomacy during World War II” at the Southwest Council of Latin American Studies and “The Mexican Side of the Immigration Backlash from Operation Wetback to the Great Border Wall” at the “Immigrant America” symposium held by Texas State University.
STEVEN HOELSCHER completed his third year as chair of the department of American Studies and taught classes on the history of photography and on comparative urbanism in Vienna, Austria. He published articles on the concept of geographic place and on the changing meaning of ethnic identity between the world wars, presented a paper at the international symposium, “Atrocity, Photography, and War” in Prato, Italy, and delivered public lectures at the Universities of Würzburg and Munich in Germany. He recently took up an appointment as Academic Curator of Photography at the Harry Ransom Center, where he is leading a scholarly effort to study the archive of Magnum Photos. In March of this year, he survived a near fatal collision with a car while riding his bicycle, and he’s grateful for all the support he’s received from friends and colleagues in American Studies.

RANDY LEWIS has been putting the finishing touches on his book, *Navajo Talking Picture: Cinema on Native Ground*, which will appear in Spring 2012. His article, “Prankster Ethics: Borat and Levinas,” is in the Fall 2011 issue of *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*. Finally, he published a short work of creative nonfiction called “Pesticide” in the experimental online journal *Version*—this piece grew out of his work with UT’s Public Feelings collective. On a louder and somewhat less academic note, he produced two music videos for the punk band Zombie vs. Shark, including one comprised of recycled footage from 1970s self-help films (http://youtu.be/DbvszydrbXo). Finally, along with Dr. Cary Cordova, he has been working on a promotional video for the America Studies department that features some of our finest students.
NHI T. LIEU published *The American Dream in Vietnamese* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), a book based on her research on popular culture of the Vietnamese diaspora. In it she explores how people displaced by war reconstruct cultural identity in the aftermath of migration. With sponsorship from UT’s Center for Asian American studies, she celebrated the book’s public release at the Association for Asian American Studies Conference in New Orleans, where she also presented new research on the transnational cultural circuits and economies of the East Asian bridal industry.

STEPHEN MARSHALL is happy to announce the publication of his book, *The City on the Hill from Below*, a political-theoretic study of prophetic black politics. His current project is an exploration of the problem of mastery within U.S. political development and political culture. This summer, Stephen completed an article on the effacement of mastery within western political thought and is finishing an article on the ambiguous legacies of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.
JEFF MEIKLE was recently appointed to the Stiles Professorship of American Studies in the College of Liberal Arts. In the past year he has contributed to transnational American Studies by publishing three articles in international journals. “Negotiating Modernity: Moholy-Nagy and American Commercial Design” appeared in Hungarian Studies Review, and “Transatlantic Refractions: Ambivalence and Cultural Hybridity in the Euro-American Road Movie” appeared in European Journal of American Studies, an online publication of the European Association for American Studies. “Designing the Machine Age in America: Streamlining in the 20th Century,” which explores resonances of 1930s streamlining in architecture from 1950 to the present, was featured in the Korean journal American Studies. He also published book reviews in Technology and Culture and Journal of Design History. In November he gave two lectures at Seoul National University in Korea, one of them a review of the current state of the discipline of American Studies. In June he presented an exploratory think-piece on “Future City” as one of ten invited participants to a workshop in Munich, Germany, on “Interpreting Architecture Technology Culture: The City.” Recent service as a consultant includes the advisory committee of the Plastics Collection at Syracuse University Library and the experts committee of a major exhibition on the designer Norman Bel Geddes opening at the Ransom Center in 2012. While on leave during the Fall 2011 semester he intends to finish writing his book Paper Atlantis: Postcards, Mass Art, and the American Scene for University of Texas Press.

JULIA MICKENBERG has received a one-year fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a three-year Humanities Research Award from UT’s College of Liberal Arts for her current book project, The New Woman Tries on Red: Russia in the American Feminist Imagination, 1905-1945. The Oxford Handbook of Children’s Literature, which Julia co-edited with Lynne Vallone, was published this past winter; it includes 26 original essays by leading scholars in the field. Julia presented papers at meetings of the American Studies Association and the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, and, with Philip Nel, delivered the Francelia Butler lecture (“Radical Children’s Literature Now!”) at the Children’s Literature Association’s annual meeting. Julia worked this summer with UT’s Center for Teaching and Learning, developing web modules on teaching pedagogy to graduate students.
Since moving to UT Austin in Fall 2010, **A. NAOMI PAIK** has published an article, “Testifying to Rightlessness: Haitian Refugees Speaking from Guantánamo,” in the Fall 2010 Issue of *Social Text*. She also presented at multiple conferences and research institutes, including the ASA, Critical Ethnic Studies, the New Americanist Working Group (Notre Dame), and the Tepoztlán Institute for the Transnational History of the Americas, and continues to revise her manuscript for publication.

**MARK SMITH** spent this last year in Finland where he was the Bicentennial Chair of American Studies at the University of Helsinki. Many of his students were European students who were attending the University but did not speak the difficult Finnish language. His American class in alcohol and other drugs quickly was narrowed down to alcohol which is an obsession, both good and bad, for the Finns. The study of Finnish drinking behavior and public policy coupled with his interest in the American situation led to several lectures and articles comparing the two societies. Mark plans to extend this comparative approach to Canada and Sweden soon.

**SHIRLEY THOMPSON** had an eventful year. She served as the Associate Director of UT’s John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies. In October 2010, her book, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Harvard, 2009), won the Robert Hamilton Grand Prize Book Award from the University Cooperative Society. She continues to write and think critically about New Orleans and Creole identity; however, she has been obsessively researching other interests, which include notions of property in African American culture and the Harlem Renaissance.
graduate student news

SEAN CASHBAUGH is preparing for his Oral Exams and teaching a class named the The Rhetoric of Science Fiction. When he has the time, he’s been researching underground culture and writing about the films of Harmony Korine.

ERIC COVEY taught Introduction to American Studies in the summer of 2011. The class focused on historic foodways as an entry point into discussions of immigration, labor, and globalization in US cultural history. Eric finished out the summer with a three-day writing retreat to Inks Lake State Park with fellow graduate students Irene Garza and Andrea Gustavson. In the spring, Eric wrote a review of Securing Africa: Post- 9/11 Discourses on Terrorism, for the E3W Review of Books. Eric will continue to focus on Africa as he moves forward with his dissertation, which examines US-directed mercenary violence in Africa in the nineteenth century. Eric received a Summer Research Fellowship from the Department of American Studies and a Continuing University Fellowship from the Graduate School to help him carry out his research. At the end of August, Eric traveled by train to the National Archives in College Park, MD, where he spent two weeks doing research in the State Department Collection. He read consular documents from Egypt in the 1870s in order to clarify the ways in which the relationship between American mercenaries and the Egyptian Khedive was mediated by the United States.

In June, doctoral student ELLEN CUNNINGHAM-KRUPPA taught Preservation Management in Simmons College’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Boston. The course was funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the University of Delaware Department of Art Conservation to support partnership between Delaware, Simmons College and the Library of Congress to educate the next generation of conservators who will care for the cultural records found in library and archives collections. During eight very full six-hour days in the classroom, Ellen and her seven students squeezed in a visit to Harvard University College’s vast Preservation and Imaging operations, including the university’s world renowned Weissman Preservation Center, a beautiful special collections lab charged with the conservation treatment and stabilization of Harvard’s rarest collections.

CHIYUMA ELLIOTT received a John Hope Franklin Dissertation Fellowship from the American Philosophical Society in 2010-11, and finished a full draft of her dissertation on representations of rural life in the Harlem Renaissance/New Negro Movement. In May, she presented her work on the poet Langston Hughes at the American Studies Faculty Colloquium at the University of California at Berkeley, where she will be teaching part-time in 2011-12.
ANDREW J. FRIEDENTHAL, while hard at work on his dissertation about cultural memory and/in superhero comic books, has contributed two book chapters which should be released in academic collections this year—“My Wonder Woman: The ‘New Wonder Woman,’ Gloria Steinem, and the Appropriation of Comic Book Iconography,” and “The Lost Sister: Lesbianism, Incest, and the Reception of Rose Red in ‘Snow White and Rose Red’”—as well as presenting papers at several conferences.

IRENE GARZA completed her second year of participating in the Intellectual Entrepreneurship program. This university-wide consortium pairs graduate student mentors with undergraduate students considering careers in academia. As part of the IE program, she traveled with her student, AMS senior Peyton McGee, to the “Critical Ethnic Studies & the Future of Genocide” Conference held March 10-12th at the University of California-Riverside. She also presented her paper “No Soy El Army: Project YANO and the Future of Counter-recruitment” at the Working Class Studies Association Conference held June 22-25 at the University of Illinois-Chicago campus. Thanks to financial support from the AMS department in the form of a summer research grant, she traveled to College Park, MD and Quantico, VA to conduct research at the National Archives and U.S. Marine Corps. base respectively. She also has an article under review for a special issue on “War & Militarism” in the Journal of Latina/o Studies and completed an entry on Latina/o casualty rates in Iraq & Afghanistan for the Encyclopedia of Latino Issues.

AMANDA GRAY completed her second year as a VOICES Group Facilitator at Pierce Middle School. In her role as Facilitator, she worked with a group of 8th grade African American and Latina girls developing sessions pertaining to leadership skills, body image issues, conflict resolution, skills for academic success, and establishing peer support systems among sisters of color. She presented her paper, “The East Side Strikes Back: Arte, Activism, and Youth in Opposition to the Gentrification of East Austin” at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) March 31-April 3 in Vancouver, BC and attended the “Critical Ethnic Studies & the Future of Genocide” Conference held March 10-12 at the University of California-Riverside. She also screened her documentary Creative Dispossession at the “Space, Place, and the Production of Knowledge” conference at the University of Hawaii April 8-10, and the Working Class Studies Association Conference held June 22-25 at the University of Illinois-Chicago campus. Finally, Revolutionary Microphone, a documentary she produced last year won Best Documentary Film at the Westchester Film Festival this past spring.

ANDI GUSTAVSON completed the first year of her two-year internship at the Harry Ransom Center where she has worked extensively with the collections and has helped with upcoming exhibitions. Her article, “‘From Observer to Activist’: Documentary Memory, Oral History, and Studs Terkel’s ‘Essence’ Narratives,” is forthcoming in the Journal of American Studies and she is currently researching for her dissertation.

ANDREW JONES is continuing work on his PhD thesis, provisionally entitled: “Transatlantic Visions: British and American Photographic Exchange in the Twentieth Century.” His article “Michael Ormerod: A Photographic Legacy” appeared in the The Daily Telegraph (UK) September 2010 and he published another article “Faith, Hope and Love: Jacob Holdt’s America” in the journal Af-
JEANNETTE VAUGHT completed her qualifying oral exam in May, and is preparing her prospectus for a dissertation on the role large animal veterinary medicine plays in shaping historical and contemporary animal sport and consumption. She presented her paper “Muybridge’s Horses: Western Visions, Maverick Science, and the Technologies of Speed” at April’s national meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association in San Antonio, and will present two papers in the fall: the first, “Flesh Prejudice: Race and Anti-Hippophagy” at the Western History Association meeting in Oakland, CA, and the second, “The Inappropriate Lens: Muybridge’s Human Subjects of Animal Locomotion” at the American Studies Association annual meeting in Baltimore, where she looks forward to meeting fellow members of the ASA Science and Technology Caucus.

KATHERINE FEO KELLY is beginning her fifth year of doctoral work, and will be continuing work on her dissertation, “Organize!: Organization as Design in the American Home, 1975-2010.” She has just completed a two-year internship at the Harry Ransom Center where she worked on an upcoming exhibition about the American industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes. Recently, she published an article in the journal Fashion Theory, and has an essay in the forthcoming catalog for the Geddes exhibition, I Have Seen the Future: Norman Bel Geddes Designs America (Abrams).

ELISSA UNDERWOOD presented her paper, “Cooking with Conviction: The Uses of Food in the Prison-Industrial Complex” at UC Riverside’s conference, Critical Ethnic Studies and the Future of Genocide last March. She is presenting another paper relating to her work on food and prisons, “Just Food: The Right to Nutrition in the Prison-Industrial Complex,” at this year’s American Studies Association annual meeting in Baltimore. Elissa has also been active as a board member for the Austin nonprofit, Community Yoga, which works to bring yoga into schools, shelters, community centers, and jails in and around Austin.

JENNIFER KELLY is a third-year graduate student in the program. She finished her coursework last year and is currently reading for oral exams, which she will take in the beginning of the spring semester. She will present her work this fall at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting and at the Southern Historical Association Annual Meeting. Since beginning the Ph.D. program at UT Austin, she has also been awarded the Ellen Clarke Temple Award in the Study of Women and History and The Louann Atkins Temple Endowed Presidential Scholarship in American Studies, which have funded, respectively, symposium participation abroad last summer and a preliminary dissertation research trip abroad this spring. In the past two years in the program, she has presented work at Dartmouth College’s Futures of American Studies Institute, University College of Dublin’s Clinton Institute for American Studies, the FLOW TV Annual Conference at UT Austin, and University of California Riverside’s Critical Ethnic Studies Conference. She has also served for the past year as managing editor for Intersections:Women’s and Gender Studies in Review Across Disciplines, UT Austin’s Center for Women’s and Gender Studies’ annual peer-reviewed journal.

JEANNETTE VAUGHT completed her qualifying oral exam in May, and is preparing her prospectus for a dissertation on the role large animal veterinary medicine plays in shaping historical and contemporary animal sport and consumption. She presented her paper “Muybridge’s Horses: Western Visions, Maverick Science, and the Technologies of Speed” at April’s national meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association in San Antonio, and will present two papers in the fall: the first, “Flesh Prejudice: Race and Anti-Hippophagy” at the Western History Association meeting in Oakland, CA, and the second, “The Inappropriate Lens: Muybridge’s Human Subjects of Animal Locomotion” at the American Studies Association annual meeting in Baltimore, where she looks forward to meeting fellow members of the ASA Science and Technology Caucus.
Doctoral Dissertations 2010-2011

Audrey Russek  
“Culinary Citizenship in American Restaurants, 1919-1964”

Anna Thompson Hajdik  
“Constructing and Consuming Rural Life in Modern America”

Tracy Wuster  
“The Most Popular Humorist who ever Lived’: Mark Twain and the Transformation of American Culture”

Craig Hillis  
“The Austin Music Scene in the 1970s: Songs and Songwriters”

Kwangjin Lee  
“A Study on Jack London’s The Call of the Wild: An Application of Organizational Behavior Theories”

Masters Reports 2010-2011

Niko Tonks  
“Craft Brewing and Community in Austin, Texas: The Black Star Co-op”

Kirsten Ronald  
“Biketivists, Hipsters, and Spandex Queens: Bicycle Politics and Cultural Critique in Austin”

Jake Maguire  
“‘Though it Blasts Their Eyes’: Slavery and Citizenship in New York City, 1790-1821”

Charity Boutte  
“Life, Land, and Labor on Avery Island in the 1920’s and 1930’s”

Voices of a Grateful Nation, a two-part CD project co-produced by recent graduate Craig Hillis, features Texas songwriters in an attempt to raise national awareness of the challenges facing combat veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries.
The 2010 American Studies Graduate Student Conference Fault Lines was held on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin on October 7 and 8. Over 25 students from universities throughout the country presented papers at the conference on a broad and interdisciplinary range of topics. Papers discussed everything from food studies to film to citizenship in a postcolonial world. The conference theme, Fault Lines, asked participants to consider where rifts or divisions occur or appear in moments of world crisis, particularly in the case of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the subsequent (though perhaps short-lived) outpouring of support from the U.S. and other global powers. Keynote speaker Ann Laura Stoler gave a talk entitled, “‘The Rot Remains’: On Imperial Debris and Colonial Aphasias,” which traced the debris of empire to locations in the postcolonial world and emphasized the interconnectedness of nationalisms which might at times seem disparate. Dr. Stoler’s talk provided a generative starting point for discussions of world crisis that would continue throughout the conference schedule.

In addition to these traditional conference panels, the conference schedule this year also included two roundtable discussions, one of which featured a panel of faculty members discussing the pedagogy of crisis. In the other roundtable discussion, a group of graduate students from the UT American Studies department debated the cultural implications of natural and political disasters. Both these roundtable discussions and our smaller discussion panels allowed more time for interaction between attendees and engagement with the arguments advanced by our conference presenters. Our hope was that by fostering interdisciplinary discussion on topics related to globalization and crisis, our conference would generate scholarly bonds and ideas that crossed disciplinary lines and helped to redefine, or to reinforce the redefinition, of what we do as scholars in the field of American Studies.

Over the years, the American Studies Graduate Conference has grown from a small departmental event to a larger university-wide event that attracts scholars from across the U.S. The growth of our conference and its success this year would not be possible without the generous support of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and our own Department of American Studies, as well as the following departments, centers, and institutes at the University of Texas: the Américo Paredes Center for Cultural Studies, the Harry Ransom Center, the Department of English, the University of Texas Humanities Institute, the Department of Geography and the Environment, the John L. Warfield Center for African and African-American Studies, the South Asia Institute, the Center for European Studies, the Institute for Historical Studies, the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, and the Department of History.

Our extremely hard-working keynote committee members Jennifer Kelly and Charity Boutté also played a critical role in the success of the conference, completing the majority of the fundraising work and arranging travel and accommodations for Dr. Stoler during her stay in Austin. Our other conference committee members Kirsten Ronald, Jeannette Vaught, Sean Cashbaugh, Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa, and Katherine Feo Kelly also worked tirelessly to organize our conference and to support its success on the day of the event. We as a committee are thankful for the opportunity to support the public image and growth of our department and to encourage scholars to present their work and engage with one another. We look forward to seeing the conference continue to grow in the coming years.
2011-12 American Studies Film Series

The American Studies Department is continuing the film screening/discussion series begun last spring for the 2011-12 academic year. The film series was initiated by recent American Studies undergraduate alum, Kyle Gardner. Last year’s series was devoted to “Violence and Masculinity,” and included films like Straw Dogs. Again following the initiative of an AMS undergrad, this year Julie Reitzi helped steer the series toward “The ‘Other’ Americans,” a theme that explores relations between the U.S. and the Caribbean, Mexico, and South America, with films ranging from the vampire/zombie flick From Dusk Till Dawn to the romance How Stella Got Her Groove Back. Both Gardner and Reitzi’s efforts have been coordinated by John Cline, an AMS graduate student. Both film series has also had the good fortune of enlisting the help of undergrads with graphic design experience; posters were designed last year by Jessica Grantham, and the current round are the work of Julia Lopez-Mobilia. Special thanks also goes out to undergraduate Jennifer Cloudt for assisting in the logistics of putting on a monthly screening this year, as well as the graduate students who have volunteered to provide introductions to some of the films. We hope to see you at the show.

2010-11 Undergraduate Honors Theses

Catherine Dunn (graduated summer 2011)
“Viewing Gender and Domesticity through Anthony Bourdain and The Pioneer Woman”

Kyle Gardner (will graduate fall 2011)
“Real Cool Time: On the Value of Music Criticism”

Jessica Grantham (graduated spring 2011)
“The “New” Antique: Memory, Self-Definition, and Culture in Modern Collecting”

Peyton McGee (will graduate fall 2011)
“Unassimilable Citizens: How Military Service and Mass Media Affects Arab Muslim Assimilation in the United States”

Alix Udelson (graduated spring 2011)
“To Be Better Jews: Jewish Summer Camps and Identity Formation in Jewish American Youth”
Over the past few months, graduate students **Emily Roehl** and **Carrie Andersen** have been busy creating a few departmental social media initiatives for your perusal. First, the department has a new blog called AMS :: ATX, which currently features student and faculty research updates, useful online archives and websites, interviews with core and affiliate faculty members in American Studies, calls for papers, a calendar of local events, and more. AMS :: ATX is a place where students and faculty in American Studies can connect with each other and a wider public, a place for publicizing research and accomplishments, and a place for discovering academic and professional opportunities in the department and beyond. Over the next few months, we’ll be expanding the kind of content you can find on the blog, so keep checking back for more. You can follow AMS :: ATX and keep up-to-date with the department and the various scholarly communities it intersects by visiting the site regularly, subscribing by e-mail (sign up on the homepage of AMS :: ATX), or by adding AMS :: ATX to your RSS feed of choice.

In addition, the department now has an official Twitter account. Follow our tweets for links to American Studies-related articles, archives, and media, departmental news, and announcements about events in and around Austin. We post content that ranges across the various disciplines and interests represented by American Studies, and we have a large, diverse group of followers. If you have a Twitter account, you can get connected by following @amstudies, or you can simply visit the website listed below to see what’s been going on in the UT AMS ether.

Both the blog and the Twitter feed are accessible through the American Studies homepage: 
http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/ams/
PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A
tax-deductible donation to the Department of American Studies.
Your gift will support graduate studies fellowships, graduate re-
search and conference travel, undergraduate research, student re-
search paper awards, and faculty development. Your check should
be payable to The University of Texas at Austin, with Department of
American Studies in the memo line. Please send your donation to:

Stephanie Kaufman
Executive Assistant
American Studies Department
The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station B7100
Austin, Texas 78712-7100

You can also make your gift on line. Please go to https://
utdirect.utexas.edu/nlogon/vip/ogp.WBX Select the Col-
lege of Liberal Arts from the drop-down menu. Then select
the American Studies Department.