Several weeks ago, our graduate community hosted an event they called the UT AMS Spring Symposium, which featured a keynote speaker and several current students. The campus guest, Dr. Carolyn de la Peña, a UT AMS alumnus and Professor of American Studies at UC Davis, presented intriguing findings from her new book project, *Empty Pleasures: the Making and Marketing of Artificial Sweeteners*. These findings were then put into bold relief by Rebecca Onion, Audrey Russek, and Anna Thompson-Hadjik, who did more than just respond to Professor de la Peña’s project; instead, they also reflected on how their own doctoral work on children’s conceptions of nature, on rural nostalgia, and on America’s dining culture was informed by the concerns raised by the keynote speaker. The packed lecture hall surged with intellectual energy.

I mention the Spring Symposium because it so perfectly showcased the very best of the American Studies tradition here in Austin. Together with the Annual Fall Conference (another remarkable event that you can read about on page 18), it was intellectually daring, while also being welcoming and friendly, it both drew on a rich legacy and pointed in new directions, and it was a lot of fun.

This issue of “Main Currents,” our third, will bring you up-to-date with many of the activities and people who are continuing to expand that tradition. I’m extremely pleased to celebrate the notable work of our faculty this year, including the publication of four books (which, for a department of ten full-time core members, is an impressive number by anyone’s count), the continually amazing high caliber of our graduate students (who win awards, present at conferences, and publish articles at a dizzying rate), and the accomplishments of our undergraduate students (who get into top-tier law and grad schools and, despite a bruising economy, are finding good jobs with the skills learned in our classrooms). It’s an exciting time for American Studies at UT!

Next year promises to be even better. We’ll be joined by three new colleagues, who are certain to bring intellectual energy and excitement to the department. Randy Lewis, Presidential Professor of American Studies and Associate Dean of the Honors College at Oklahoma University, writes about the politics of creative expression in art, cinema, and literature; an expert in the field of documentary film, Dr. Lewis will bring a badly needed perspective of media studies to the department. Dr. Cary Cordova, Assistant Professor of History and Latina/Latino Studies at the University of Illinois, specializes in Latina/o cultural production, including art, music, and the performing arts; her work will build on the growing interest of our students and faculty in the area of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. While we welcome both Professor Lewis and Professor Cordova back to UT, Naomi Paik is coming to Austin via Yale, where she is completing her Ph.D. in American Studies. With broad research interests in comparative ethnic studies and globalization, Dr. Paik’s dissertation examines the legal frameworks that deny certain people the rights of full citizenship. You will undoubtedly be reading more about these talented scholar-teachers in future editions of “Main Currents.”

Finally, I would like to extend a personal invitation for you to visit us in Burdine Hall next time you are on the Forty Acres and be sure to drop us a line with the latest news. We’d love to hear from you.

**DEAR STUDENTS, FRIENDS, AND ALUMNI OF AMERICAN STUDIES,**

STEVEN HOELSCHER, CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN STUDIES  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN STUDIES AND GEOGRAPHY
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ONE OF THE JOYS of scholarly research is that you never know where the work will take you. I “met” Tiny Kline in a traditional academic way—in the archives. While I conducted research on the American circus at Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, for my first book, Fred Dahlinger, the library director, told me that Circus World possessed the memoir of a remarkable circus performer named Tiny Kline. This four-foot, ten-inch immigrant from Hungary with the punning nickname meaning “little little” in German and Yiddish, had worked burlesque in her twenties and then became a well-known iron-jaw performer who hung by her teeth from skyscrapers, blimps, and coliseums. At age 70, she became Disneyland’s first Tinker Bell.

Fred hoped I might be able to edit and annotate Kline’s intimate memoir of her life in American show business for publication. I jumped at the opportunity: in addition to its juicy details, Kline’s story mirrored the movement of American entertainment from urban cheap amusements to the exurban world of Disney through the twentieth century. However, I encountered a few initial obstacles; most significant of which was the fact that the library had no record of receiving Kline’s manuscript. This put the memoir under the murky jurisdiction of the Copyright Extension Act, which extended a manuscript’s copyright protection to 70 years after an author’s death, unless she or he specified otherwise. I sobered at the thought of not being able to publish Kline’s story until I was 70 years old (Kline died just a couple of months after I was born). I ordered her probate records from Los Angeles and—luckily—struck gold. Kline willed her writings to Sam Abbott, an entertainment journalist. Abbott, in turn, gave Kline’s work to Circus World Museum.

With copyright now secured, I could proceed. I set out to pare down 1,000 pages of text (Kline wrote two versions of her memoir, each approximately 500 pages) into a publishable volume. To complete the annotations, I dug through archives in Wisconsin, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas, and Florida. I met one of Kline’s neighbors from Inglewood, California, her relatives, and people who had known her from the circus and Disneyland. Although not famous during her lifetime, she popped up everywhere: movies, Broadway, vaudeville, amusement parks, burlesque, and even a flophouse. After the book was published in 2008, a man from New Jersey called to share his Tiny Kline story. A family friend sought advice about dental implants, so this man searched the Internet for information. There, he stumbled upon a YouTube video of Kline’s 1932 death defying 1,300-foot “slide for life” 500 feet above Times Square while hanging by her teeth. He immediately realized who she was: his father, a policeman, had often talked of an amazing acrobat named Tiny Kline who dangled 1,500 feet from a blimp over the Steel Pier at Atlantic City. He would turn to the sky and see her twirling by her teeth as he patrolled the docks for careless daredevil divers, plunging into the ocean to pull people out as part of working his beat.

Tiny Kline yearned for her story to reach a larger audience. I’ve had fun helping her make that happen. In the meantime, I’m in the thick of writing another book. My current project on animal welfare builds upon my prior scholarship on the American circus—an entertainment form built upon the athletic interplay of acrobatic people and animals, thus deeply vested in human-animal relationships. While conducting my circus research, I found frequent references to public protests over the treatment of circus animals during the Gilded Age, which prompted me to investigate. I am now working to make sense of the way that an alchemy of faith (in the form of Protestant piety) and war (in the shape of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and American empire building at the turn of the twentieth century) fueled an explosive new far-flung social movement dedicated to animals: from lumberjack communities in northern Minnesota to Cuba, the Philippines, and India. Given the movement’s emphasis on uplift and urgency of creating an “empire of kindness” in a violent world, I suggest that the early animal welfare movement helped shape and define the meanings of modern American humanitarianism. I’ll let you know where this work has taken me once I have finished drafting the book. However, I’ve already read materials from an American animal hospital in Fez, Morocco, cockfighting materials from Cuba, select portions of the Bombay Legislative Council Debates, and many other sources. Undoubtedly the research will lead me other places as I make sense of this movement.
“Tiny Kline yearned for her story to reach a larger audience. I’ve had a lot of fun helping her make that happen.”
“How ironic that barbecue, the food most likely to inspire homilies to unreconstructed cavemen, is the subject around which such collaboration emerged.”

Elizabeth Engelhardt

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN STUDIES AND WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES
This is the story of a book, a website, a class, and a multi-state coalition that is equally the story of mentoring and collaboration in our American Studies department.

In December 2006, I was sitting in my office, beginning to plan my spring graduate seminar on American Food. While I had taught the class on an undergraduate level in the past, this was to be my first time teaching it for our doctoral students. Frankly, I was stumped. I wanted an overarching theme for the class; the study of food is so broad, and yet such a relatively new field in the humanities, that we needed something through which to filter our discussion.

That’s when the phone rang. The voice on the other end said, “This is Luke Zimmermann, president of the Central Texas Barbecue Association.” A small nonprofit, CTBBQA includes restaurant owners, sausage producers, and passionate individuals all interested in documenting and celebrating the traditions and practices of Texas barbecue. Their mission statement calls for the collection of barbecue oral histories, but they had neither the time nor the expertise to collect those interviews. The conversation Luke and I had that day proved to be the birth of the Texas branch of the Southern Barbecue Trail oral history project (visit our work at www.southernbbqtrail.com) and, now, Republic of Barbecue: Stories Beyond the Brisket (UT Press, October 2009), a book produced collaboratively by eleven of the original class members and me. Behind the authors stand our community partners in CTBBQA and our intellectual partners at the Southern Foodways Alliance in Mississippi.

Even more important to all of us are the twenty-five individuals who let us put a microphone in front of their faces and bring our cameras into their workplaces. In many ways, the book came into being because we felt like the oral history interviews were only the beginning of a conversation in which they had invited us to participate. The book is our attempt to continue the exchange by answering back to these diverse voices of barbecue culture in the region. Because of its thoroughgoing collaborative nature, consensus organizing structure, and community focus, the whole barbecue project became the most feminist project that I have ever done—albeit on what often seemed like the least feminist topic. How ironic that barbecue, the food most likely to inspire homilies to unreconstructed cavemen, is the subject around which such collaboration emerged.

Our decision to stay together as a team well after the class ended and to pursue a book contract means we have had to get to know each other well. We have had to pool our skills, at times stepping forward to contribute and at other times stepping back. We have liked each other, fussed with each other (mercifully briefly), loved the project, and hated the sight of barbecue. We have eaten together, piled into cars for long trips, sorted thousands of photographs, and are even now embarking on a new adventure of marketing, publicity, and design. I can count at least four national conference presentations, three book reviews, and a couple of distinct publications to emerge from the process—and the book doesn’t arrive until fall. We are pretty certain we have something to talk about at future job interviews and cocktail parties.

Even in writing this short column, I notice something happening; it happens, in fact, every time I set out to talk about the barbecue project. It is what the past year has taught me—and it is why I will do more such scholarship in the future. I began this article as a first-person narrative. I arrive here with it having become a multi-voiced story.

We. The direct members of the team: Marsha Abrahams, Marvin Bendele, Gavin Benke, Andrew Busch, Eric Covey, Dave Croke, Melanie Haupt, Carly Kocurek, Rebecca Onion, Lisa Powell, and Remy Ramirez. And all the supporting team members from the department (including Jackie Lynch, our undergraduate transcriptionist), the press, the community, and in distant states, the listing of whose names would make this already wordy column far too long.

I do, however, have some final thoughts about the consequence of doing such wide-reaching projects in American Studies. They are partial and evolving, but I offer them here as I reflect on the process so far. With such departmental efforts, we can augment crucial bits of graduate education in a more programmatic way than by relying only on informal mentoring. We can include professional development in graduate classes. We can practice activism together.

We can take more seriously the idea of apprenticeship in the process of book writing. We can acknowledge the already impressive skills many of our students bring to graduate school—and make the classroom a place where the sum is greater than the parts. We can do what humanities do best—build bridges to communities. We can learn from people who have lifetimes of knowledge to share.

A portion of royalties from the sale of every copy of Republic of Barbecue goes into a fund to support future graduate student research in the department. Dean Randy Diehl has graciously agreed to match that contribution. My own work on the barbecue project continues, and we’re currently exploring the idea of a statewide Foodways Texas organization. There’s always more room at the table, if you’d like to join us.
IT’S AMAZING THE PLACES MY AMERICAN Studies education has taken me over the past year. Just last March—which sometimes feels like yesterday, sometimes a lifetime ago—I found myself in New Orleans researching a senior thesis on that city’s public housing. Placing great trust in my professors’ advice and the power of scholarship money, I had chosen to focus my vague ideas about housing projects on a single city I’d never even visited—and suddenly, I was there. I spent my spring break not only elbow-deep in archives at Tulane University, but falling in love with New Orleans: its food, its architecture, its bittersweet mixture of community spirit and lingering racial and economic strife. By sheer benefit of majoring in American Studies, I was no stranger to these issues. It felt like having instant access to a secret history seldom revealed to outsiders like me.

It’s a long way to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I’m now a student at Harvard Law. But American Studies has had its influence, in one form or another, at every point along the way. Throughout a painful law school application process, few people were more supportive than my thesis advisor, Steven Hoelscher. And that classic skill of seeing documents in their historical context, stressed so heavily in American Studies, has been useful since my first day here. Not to mention the AMS course that convinced me to study law in the first place: Sarah Weddington’s “Gender Discrimination,” which I would recommend to anyone interested in testing the waters of a legal education.

Of course, nothing could fully prepare me for the reality of Harvard Law School. Life here moves at a breakneck pace, so I was very lucky to arrive in Cambridge after a relaxing summer, a full month before school began. Unlike some of my classmates, I had time to plant my roots and explore the Boston area before things got too hectic. Its marriage of big-city bustle and college-town eccentricity reminds me of Austin in many ways, and I feel more like a local every day.

However, Harvard itself has quickly become the real center of my world. It’s just as challenging and stimulating as you’d predict, full of brilliant professors and demanding coursework. But our 18 classroom hours each week also compete with an impossible number of student groups, volunteer opportunities, and prestigious speakers seeming to
Unable to resist, I’ve wound up joining a small reading group that meets in one of my professors’ homes, working on a law journal, and serving as an exit pollster on Election Day. Most rewarding of all, I’ve also joined a student practice organization called the Tenant Advocacy Project, which provides legal help to public housing tenants. TAP is the most enriching part of my Harvard experience so far, and I might never have joined were it not for UT American Studies and the thesis I wrote there.

Luckily, exhausting as all this can be, it still isn’t the Harvard Law of The Paper Chase, One L, or even Legally Blonde. At today’s Harvard the professors are kinder, the classmates more social, the administration more approachable, and the free coffee more bountiful than the reputation suggests. As our fabulous Dean put it during orientation, “The competition is over. And you won.”

If that’s true, it is largely due to my experience in American Studies at UT. There I discovered the issues I’m passionate about, and here I’m learning how to make a career out of them. It’s been a match made in heaven so far, and I can hardly wait to see where it takes me next.
“While I always had recognized how much my graduate work in American Studies at UT had shaped my intellectual development . . . it was not until I took this first job that I understood how much it had helped me become an effective teacher.”
IN THE BRIEF TIME SINCE I graduated—I handed in my dissertation in August 2007—I have held two academic positions at two different institutions. I left UT for Penn State Erie, where I had been hired as a lecturer in visual studies to teach introductory film and media courses. I currently am an assistant professor in the history department at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). Our department is federated with the history department at Rutgers University-Newark (which literally is located across the street), where I am also appointed as an affiliated faculty member in the American Studies graduate program.

Penn State Erie, in many ways, was a long way from UT. I was part of the fine arts faculty, and my colleagues were two musicians, an art historian, and a theater scholar. The arts program is housed in the school of humanities and social sciences, which had a handful of majors—English, history, psychology, political science—but which mostly provides the general education courses our students needed to graduate. A number of academic disciplines are represented by one faculty member: my friend Joshua is the philosophy department; Leigh Ann—whose office was located across the hall from mine—is the anthropology department. The majority of my students were seeking pre-professional degrees, primarily in engineering, business, or computer science. Many held down multiple jobs in addition to being full time students. Some of my students were veterans, and just about all of them had a friend or relative serving in the military. Many had grown up in or around Erie and barely had traveled outside of northwestern Pennsylvania or upstate New York. Their professional ambitions were modest, and some never had entertained the notion of living outside of the area where they had grown up. They thought it exotic that I had lived in Texas, and to ingratiate myself to them I would toss in a “y’all” every once in a while for effect.

I had been hired as a multi-year lecturer and though I was encouraged to pursue an active research agenda, my primary responsibility was to teach. I had a good deal of freedom as to how I organized my classes, the kind of assignments I gave, the material that I covered. I found my colleagues to be on the whole kind and supportive, always ready to share war stories from their own classrooms when asked. I was grateful for this, but also felt especially fortunate for the training I received while at UT. While I always had recognized how much my graduate work in American Studies at UT had shaped my intellectual development and research agenda, it was not until I took this first job that I understood how much it had helped me become an effective teacher.

When lecturing in my introductory film course, with 120 students, I frequently channeled Mark Smith, whose TA I had been many years prior. Mark is still one of the best lecturers I have ever seen, and I often found myself mimicking his style—telling stories to illustrate a broader conceptual point, modulating my voice consistently throughout the lecture, pacing the room and pausing for effect. In my media studies course, I developed a paper assignment that heavily borrowed from one Julia Mickenberg had given when I was her TA, which was the most successful assignment I created that year. Janet Davis modeled what it meant to be a good mentor and showed me how to provide feedback that managed to be simultaneously critical and constructive. The opportunity to design my AMS 315 course was tremendously helpful, as were the many conversations I had with other AIs up in that little office on the top floor of Garrison, which to date are still the most meaningful discussions I’ve had about pedagogy.

I left Erie for NJIT for many reasons. The position at NJIT was peculiarly perfect for me: I was hired to teach media history courses and a media law and policy course for a new major in law, technology and culture. My teaching load is substantially lower, which has provided me more time to dedicate to my research, for which I am ecstatic. Winter in Erie is bleak, grey, and snowy, and I was a blubbering mess of a person for its duration. I now live in NY, and for many personal reasons it is good to be back on the east coast. Importantly, I am also thrilled at the opportunity to teach in an American Studies graduate program, where I hope to provide the same level of mentorship, preparation, and support that was given to me.
ON THAT DAY BACK IN 1997 WHEN I LIFTED the top off of a box of documents from 1898 at the Mark Twain Papers in Berkeley, California, I could never have predicted that 12 years later I would spend every waking hour obsessing over the Internet. I used to be an historian of sorts. I used to be someone who knew a lot about late-19th century American intellectual life. I was once the sort of scholar who spent a lot of time turning fragile pages and sorting through neat red boxes in quiet archives. Now, I blog. I Twitter. I Google.

I’m not sure how it all happened. It certainly happened fast. I entered the Ph.D. program in American Studies in 1994 with a clear idea: I wanted to write a cultural history of American copyright law. There was no such book. And I wanted to read one. So I thought I might as well write one. UT was the ideal place for me. I was able to work with a group of professors who valued breadth, mental dexterity, and lucid writing. They had all written successful books. So they were able to reverse-engineer the process for me. They offered me keen advice on networking in both the academic and publishing worlds. As much as I learned from the faculty, I learned twice as much from my colleagues in graduate school. When one of them got really excited about a book assigned in a course I never took—James Carey’s Communication as Culture comes to mind—she would insist I read it as well. When someone had a really cool idea for a paper or dissertation, he would run it by a group of us and we would make it better. Maybe it was just the caffeine talking, but I think I went to school with the most brilliant, fun, and friendly folks possible. We read some heavy stuff in those days. But we also gathered every Monday night to watch 90210 and Melrose Place. The environment we built together made all the difference in the world.

After teaching for a wonderful ABD year in Wesleyan University’s history department, I defended my dissertation in the spring of 1999. About a week later, I got an offer to join a communication department at New York University. Led by polymaths and public intellectuals like Neil Postman and Todd Gitlin, it was no ordinary communication department. Like many others in the late 1990s, they were curious about copyright in the new digital environment. So I jumped quickly into the 21st century. NYU became like another grad school for me. I mastered a whole new body of work. Two years later, I skipped over to teach at the University of Wisconsin’s library school; librarians love

“UT was the ideal place for me. I was able to work with a group of professors who valued breadth, mental dexterity, and lucid writing. They had all written successful books.”

Siva Vaidhyanathan

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MEDIA STUDIES AND LAW THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

“UT was the ideal place for me. I was able to work with a group of professors who valued breadth, mental dexterity, and lucid writing. They had all written successful books.”
thinking about copyright as well. That’s when my first book, *Copyrights and Copywrongs* (NYU Press, 2001) came out. In 2002 I was back at NYU, mostly because I missed blintzes, bagels, the Yankees, and 3,000 neighbors who died September 2001. Four more years at NYU saw another authored book, *The Anarchist in the Library* (Basic Books, 2004) and a co-edited collection (with UT alum Carolyn de la Peña), *Rewiring the Nation: Technology and American Studies* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). All the while, my graduate school friendships and connections grew stronger and dearer. I enjoy “representing” every fall at ASA, although I lack a strong scholarly connection to the Association these days.

By the spring of 2007 I was lucky enough to field some attractive opportunities from other universities interested in expanding their study of new media and digital culture. The University of Virginia invited me to help establish their Department of Media Studies and funded research on my forthcoming book, *The Googlization of Everything* (University of California Press). By now, no one cares that I once knew a lot about William James and Mark Twain. I can barely remember it all. Fortunately, I have Google to remind me.
“I want to know more about the Jim Hightowers and Bill Moyerses of the world in order to dispel what we think we know through the Jett Rinks and J. R. Ewings.”
WHEN ASKED TO GIVE the briefest description of my work, I say that I study Austin’s Willie-and-Waylon moment. If this opens up discussion, I get the opportunity to introduce that odd 1970s Austin narrative that claims a confluence of the “rednecks” and the “hippies” around the figure of the cosmic cowboy. A number of authors, including UT AMS alumni Jan Reid and Barry Shank, have celebrated or critiqued what Steve Fromholz dubbed the “progressive country scare.” My particular interest in the subject lies in historicizing models of Anglo-Texan masculinity that run against the grain of that figure’s dominant conception while deploying some of its traditional qualities. I want to know more about the Jim Hightowers and Bill Moyerses of the world in order to dispel what we think we know through the Jett Rinks and J. R. Ewings. What does all this talk of hippies and rednecks mean and how does it fit into larger narratives concerning region, gender, class, race, and the body politic?

I argue for a relationship between the countercultural revisioning of the cowboy in the 1970s and the contemporaneous activism of traditionally disfranchised groups to expand the notion of the representative Texan. There is a corollary here with the wider borrowings of white ethnicities from black power rhetoric and the attention to the constructed nature of masculinity inspired by feminist agency and gay liberation. This is, perhaps, a large load to place on discourses of hippie-redneck hybridity. To support these arguments with particulars required studying the hippie-rednecks where they lived. My consequent break from microfilm jockeying to oral history came when I learned that Eddie Wilson, proprietor of the influential 1970s venue the Armadillo World Headquarters and now of Threadgill’s, was working on a series of projects related to the period. I signed on as a researcher, paid largely in chicken-fried steak from Threadgill’s, but benefiting more from the contacts Wilson so generously provided. Through this work, I met writer Joe Nick Patoski, artist Bob Wade, fellow American Studies dissertator and Gonzo guitarist Craig Hillis, and Leea Meckling of the South Austin Museum of Popular Culture.

Listening to their stories, even those with seemingly small resonance, has proven compelling. As an example, Leea Meckling recounted how the position of bartender at the Armadillo was a strictly male domain, resting on the claim that women could not differentiate between fine Texas brews, each of which had its rabid partisans. In frustration, Leea switched the lines to the Lone Star and Pearl taps. No one noticed. By such small acts, Leea and others deflated the macho expertise associated with the position and opened the bar (and its generous tip income) to women. Beer was a salient arena for such contestation. In another incident, the Armadillo agreed to promote Lone Star Beer if they could have a say in advertising. This resulted in a radio campaign in which the Armadillo insisted that Lone Star’s new theme song be performed not only by its authors, the progressive country Lost Gonzo Band, in Lone Star’s key demographic, but by the likes of Sunny Ozuna and bluesman Freddie King. If Lone Star were to claim itself the “national beer of Texas,” the Armadillo argued, it would have to represent all Texans.

These seem like small matters compared to the celebrity status Willie Nelson attained in these years or LBJ’s return home to the Hill Country or Raza Unida’s electoral victories in South Texas or the National Women’s Conference in Houston, and, well, so they are. Taken together, though, such vignettes of daily life constituted a charged arena of contestation in the 1970s that did not lie so far from the nationally significant events listed above. Bob Bullock, who groomed George W. Bush, drank at that Armadillo bar. The Lost Gonzo Band played cards with Darrell Royal, who played golf with Lyndon Johnson, who waged the Vietnam War. Ann Richards, who also frequented the Armadillo (on at least one occasion doing so dressed as Dolly Parton), delivered the first speech for the ERA at that National Women’s Conference. Demonstrating that these connections are more than mere coincidence, that they sketch a shared discursive field and network of social capital affecting power relations and modes of representation in the state, is the primary challenge of my project, and one I enjoy exploring. That, and I like talking about Willie and Waylon.
Having been appointed founding director of the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies in September 2007, ROBERT ABZUG has been spending the last year and a half building the Center—recruiting faculty, developing curriculum, sponsoring research and public programming, and raising funds for the Center.

JANET DAVIS published “Propagating the Gospel of Animal Kindness: Sacred Cows, Christians, and American Animal Welfare Activism with Reference to India at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in Speaking Truth to Power: Religion, Caste, and the Subaltern Question in India, edited by Manu Bhagavan and Anne Feldhaus (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, June 2008), along with an encyclopedia entry. She gave lectures at the Chazen Museum/University of Wisconsin—Madison, the Annual Conference on South Asia, Rice University, and Trinity University (San Antonio). She also traveled to New York City to serve as a consultant for Bard Graduate Center’s forthcoming exhibition on the American circus. She journeyed to College Park, Maryland, and Minneapolis/St. Paul, where she found fascinating transnational archival materials related to her current book project on the American animal welfare movement. During the remainder of her leave time, she is gearing up for more travel in Spring/Summer 2009 to Copenhagen, London, Madison, Philadelphia, College Park, and Boston, as she finishes her remaining research. Speaking of books, she is currently swimming in excellent reading material as a committee member of ASA’s John Hope Franklin Prize Committee. Lastly, she is in the thick of the joys and challenges of raising adolescent kids.

ELIZABETH ENGELHARDT, along with working on Republic of Barbecue with her eleven co-authors, was invited to participate in a special issue of the journal Appalachian Heritage on Appalachians and Race. For that she wrote “Effie Waller Smith: African American Appalachian Poetry from the Breaks.” She is also contributing to a forthcoming southern food issue of the journal Southern Cultures on “Canning Tomatoes, Growing Better and More Perfect Women.” She has had the opportunity to talk about barbecue, tomato clubs, and moonshine—all aspects of gender and southern food—at conferences of the Association for the Study of Food and Society, the Southern Foodways Alliance, and the Appalachian Studies Association. Those topics are all part of her current book project, A Mess of Greens: Southern Gender and Southern Food.
In August last year, STEVEN HOELSCHER celebrated the launch of his book Picturing Indians: Photographic Encounters and Tourist Fantasies in H. H. Bennett’s Wisconsin Dells (University Wisconsin Press, 2008) in the Dells with an event that featured traditional Ho-Chunk drumming and dancing. He published an article in GeoJournal, which explores the relationship between historical memory, urban space, and photography in post-war Guatemala; and presented a paper, “Tourismus und Rassismus im amerikanischen Süd: Ungleichheiten in schwarz-weiß” (“Tourism Inequality in White and Black: Landscapes of Race in the American South”), at the Deutscher Historikertag, in Dresden, Germany. In December, he was promoted to full professor.

In addition to completing his book, The City on the Hill from Below, STEPHEN MARSHALL has been instrumental in organizing The University Town Hall, a political forum sponsored by The John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies. These gatherings have brought together people from across the University and from all points of the city of Austin to discuss, debate, and deliberate about the implications of the historic campaigns and election of 2008, and the broader cultural and political significance of electing the country’s first black president. The next Town Hall is scheduled for early May and will take as its theme, The First One Hundred Days of the Obama Presidency. Professor Marshall will be commencing research for his next project which will examine diasporic black political surrealism, transnational black encounters with the absurd, and the politics and cultural productions that are generated out of this encounter.


NHI LIEU is completing the revisions for her first book, The American Dream in Vietnamese: Diasporic Desires and Pursuits of Pleasure in Cultural Production to be published by the University of Minnesota Press. She presented a paper for her new project at the Association for Asian American Studies national conference, “Beauty Queens of the Diaspora: Discourses of ‘Social Progress’ and the Commercialization of Vietnamese Ethnicity.” Nhi and her husband Toan Leung are expecting a baby sibling for their two-year old daughter Sophie in May.

PHOTO BY ANDY STEINKE. REPRINTED COURTESY OF THE WISCONSIN DELLS EVENTS.
JULIA MICKENBERG received the Children’s Literature Association’s book prize for *Learning from the Left: Children’s Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (2006), which she accepted at ChLA’s annual meeting this past June. At the American Studies Association’s 2008 annual meeting in October she gave a talk entitled “Sex and the Soviet Union: American Women, Desire, and the Romance of Russia” which drew on research she is doing for a new book project on the “new woman” and the “new Russia” in the early twentieth century. She received a Special Research Grant from the University of Texas for research on the new project, and also received grants from Smith, Radcliffe, and NYU Libraries for research in their archives. *Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children’s Literature*, which Julia co-edited with Philip Nel, was published by New York University Press this past fall, garnering reviews from the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *New Yorker*, the *Washington Post*, the *Texas Observer*, the *Utne Reader*, and other publications, as well as interviews on numerous radio programs. She is currently co-editing *The Oxford Handbook of Children’s Literature* with Lynne Vallone and chairing the book prize committee for the Society for the History of Childhood and Youth. In the fall semester she was a fellow in the Humanities Institute’s seminar on “Ethical Life in a Global Society”; she is currently teaching a new graduate course on Modernism, Feminism, and Radicalism; and she continues her study of Russian language and her work as Graduate Advisor for the department. Dr. Mickenberg will hold the Jay C. and Ruth Halls Visiting Scholar award from the University of Wisconsin and will be an honorary fellow in the University of Wisconsin’s Institute for Research in the Humanities.”

SHIRLEY THOMPSON is pleased to report that she was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure last fall. Her book, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans*, a cultural history of New Orleans’ free people of color in the nineteenth century, was published in February by Harvard University Press. At work on a new project on African-American conceptions of property and ownership, she is happily spending more time in her hometown of Atlanta researching early twentieth century black entrepreneurship. Her article “The Hard Work of Black Play” (*Leisure Studies*, October 2008) traces related themes in the short stories of Charles W. Chesnutt.
GAVIN BENKE has been busy since passing his orals last April. An essay, “Where is Enron: Changing Perceptions of Geographic Relationships in the Deregulation of California’s Energy Market,” appeared in Business and Economic History On-Line in summer of 2008. More recently, he co-edited a special section on culture and economics for the e3w Review of Books which is published annually by UT’s English department. However, since finishing his prospectus last December, Gavin Benke has primarily focused on his dissertation that uses Enron to examine political economy and cultural production in the postindustrial age.

KATHERINE FEO is studying for her oral exams and has attended the Winterthur Program’s Material Culture Symposium for Emerging Scholars at the University of Delaware in April with a paper on the Personal Effects Archive at the Harry Ransom Center. She has also participated in a research colloquium around the fashion exhibit “Reveal or Conceal?” at the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal with a paper on the use of prison dress as a tool for visual rhetoric by radical U.S. suffragists.

ANDREW J. FRIEDENTHAL, in the midst of finishing up course work and beginning to read for his oral exams, presented the paper, “My Wonder Woman: Gloria Steinem, ‘The New Wonder Woman,’ and the Appropriation of Comic Book Iconography” at both Wizard World Texas (Wizard University panel) and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Women’s & Gender History Symposium. The extended article of the same paper, with the same title, has been accepted for publication in an as-yet-untitled academic collection on comics and graphic narrative. During winter break, he spent a week in residence at the Dragon’s Egg performing arts center in Mystic, Connecticut, serving as dramaturge for a new dance piece by LA actress/dancer/choreographer Hannah Chodos, where he also began work on a new full-length play.

IRENE GARZA presented a paper on the Texas Good Neighbor Commission at the 2008 American Studies Association Conference in October and served as chair of the UT-AMS Graduate Student News Committee.
Student Conference. She also mentored a UT undergraduate student as part of the College of Liberal Arts Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) program, completed her MA project on Latinos and the “War on Terror” and in April, presented her work on immigrant coalitions at the American Crossroads conference sponsored by the UT Center for Asian-American Studies (CAAS).

CARLY A. KOCUREK and is currently working on her dissertation, a history of early video game arcades and their relationship to masculinity. She published “Gaming for the Gal on the Go: Advertising the Nintendo DS” and “The Right to Play: Youth, Video Gaming, and the Law,” both in Flow, as well as contributing a book review to the Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies. She received the 2009 I/O Award for Best Student Paper in Computer Culture at the SW/TX PCA/ACA and was named 2008 Volunteer of the Year for OutYouth, an Austin-based non-profit that provides support to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth ages 12 to 19. Also, she served as a coordinating committee member both for the 2008 Flow Conference and for the 2008 UT American Studies graduate student conference. In addition to guest lecturing at Rice University, she presented papers at the SW/TX PCA/ACA meeting and at the meeting of the Cultural Studies Association.

ROBIN O’SULLIVAN received an invitation to attend the Spring Academy on American History, Culture & Politics, held at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies in Germany. This one-week conference in April 2009 accepted twenty Ph.D. students from around the world and provided them with the opportunity to present and discuss their dissertation projects. The Spring Academy also offered participants the chance to work with experts in their fields of study during workshops held by visiting scholars. This event at the University of Heidelberg yielded cross-disciplinary and international discussions while creating a productive atmosphere for further scholarly exchange and contact.

AMY WARE defended her dissertation, “The Cherokee Kid: Will Rogers and the Tribal Genealogies of American Indian Celebrity,” in the spring of 2009. The project was nominated for the university’s Outstanding Dissertation Award by the department. She will also be the first student to graduate under the university’s Indigenous Studies Graduate Portfolio, a new program intended to promote cross-disciplinary research in Native issues worldwide. Some of her research findings have recently been published in Ethnohistory and American Indian Quarterly.

This year’s conference theme, "MONGREL AMERICA" asked participants to grapple with discourses produced around notions of mixture. Although U.S. cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class hybridity is often celebrated, the historical preoccupation with “contamination” or one might argue, “mongrelization,” has also deeply informed the U.S. cultural landscape in paradoxical and contradictory ways. Thus, our attempt to unpack the complexity of this history and its impact on American cultural identity came from many approaches—some critical, some ironic, and even some that were hopeful. True to our discipline, we drew our interrogations from a variety of fields including literature, history, art, political science, and cultural studies.

This commitment to diverse disciplines was reflected in a broad array of panels—45 student presenters representing over 25 different universities. Six students from the UT-AMS department participated as panelists. 15 AMS students served as moderators. One of the highlights was the participation of noted cultural studies expert Dick Hebdige, who presented his keynote address, “Becoming Animal: Race, Terror, and the American Roots” to a standing-room-only crowd of over 150 audience members. AMS graduate student Katherine Feo provided welcoming remarks. Dr. Shirley Thompson delivered the introduction. Professor Hebdige’s address was followed by a reception at the Hole in the Wall bar and restaurant. Professor Hebdige later participated in a roundtable discussion with graduate students from affiliate departments including the Departments of English, Radio-Television-Film, History, Mexican-American Studies, and Musicology.

There was large-scale participation of both the UT and wider Austin community. Coffeehouses Ruta Maya and the Texas Coffee Traders donated coffee and community organizers Susana Almanza and Carmen Llanes of PODER sponsored a “Gentri-Tour” to educate students about East Austin gentrification issues. Here are a few examples of papers presented:

- **KATHERINE FEO**, “Performing Prison: Dress, Modernity and the Radical Suffrage Body”
- **ANDREW BUSCH**, “Changes in the Landscape: East Austin and the Cultural Politics of Gentrification”
- **ANTHONY FASSI**, “Urban Exploration as Historical Preservation: Brooklyn, Paris, Niagara Falls”
- **JOSH HOLLAND**, “Cooper’s Ordeal: Racial Construction in the Order of the Arrow, Boy Scouts of America”
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