

The University of Iowa American Studies Newsletter

July 2005



"All Summer Long"

Midwestern thermometers seem permanently stuck over 90, faculty and students alike have headed for vacation climes or are hiding somewhere indoors, and downtown Iowa City alternately feels like a ghost town or a tourist village choked with families each towing at least one 16, 17, or 18 year old with attitude. It's my favorite time of year and the closest to peace and quiet that it gets. So, that means: N-E-W-S-L-E-T-T-E-R.

As John Raeburn reported in the last newsletter, the American Studies office has been merged into a centralized office in the Jefferson Building that serves four academic units, and thus we have had to reduce the number of newsletters we can produce annually. Happily, both Laura Kastens and Carrie Louvar are still with us: Laura remains the chief staff liaison for American Studies, and Carrie was promoted to handle personnel and budgetary matters for all four units in this, her 30th year working for UI.

Despite having to give up some staff services, we have thrived this year. We brought George Sanchez (USC) as an Ida Beam Distinguished Visiting Scholar, Leola Bergmann (the first woman to receive an Iowa American Studies PhD in 1944) won a Distinguished Collegiate Fellow award, and we sponsored a February symposium on the arts in American Studies scholarship. Our symposium guests included: Miles Orvell, Tom Doherty as the 2005 Albert E. Stone Distinguished Alumnus Speaker, Angela Miller, and Bruce McConachie. We're working on a volume of essays based on this event. We also officially added to our faculty two important Iowa scholars who have long been active in American Studies – Ken Cmiel and Horace Porter – and Ken honored all of us as the 2005 UI Presidential Lecturer, when he gave an outstanding talk on war photography.

Our year-long lecture series on the arts broke new ground and even went well beyond "lecturing." We sponsored a December radio show on American music that featured a panel discussion and performances by celebrated jazz pianist Dan Knight and former American Studies student/recording blues artist David Zollo. Part of KSUI's "Know the Score" series, the live broadcast from the UI Art Museum (complete with a fabulous buffet) was filled with American Studies musicians, music scholars, and music lovers. In the spring, we remade our Jefferson Bldg. "lecture" room into a gallery space for PhD student Kelly McLaughlin's multi-media installations. At the opening, Kelly talked about the relationships between her art and American Studies.

We're now planning next year's events – although maybe not so ambitious as this year! We will be co-hosting Prof. Wanda Corn in September, and her talks (scheduled to coincide with important art exhibits in Cedar Rapids and Davenport) give us an opportunity not only for a proseminar that will read Corn but also for a ROAD TRIP! We will be checking out the art in those cities. [See p. 6 for a tentative schedule of this fall's speakers.] We also welcome back Professor Emeritus Rich Horwitz to teach a graduate seminar on interviewing, field work methods – basically Rich doing what Rich does best – in spring 06.

We have a strong sense of direction and forward momentum, but more on that in a fall newsletter when the season is riper for philosophical musing. I do want to thank each of our donors in 2004 and 2005, both those who gave anonymously and Dr. Eric & Susan Sandeen, Dr. Susan Coultrap-McQuin, Paul Kleiman, Dr. Michael & Elizabeth Maves, Thomas Ellbogen,

Dorothy Paul, Sally Lindgren, Paul Deaton, Dr. Valerine Halverson Pace & David E. Pace, Dr. Stephanie Bennett-Smith, Dr. Bradley Williams, Dr. Franklin Lloyd, Dr. Daniel Boylan, and Dr. Chrys Poff. Contributions to the American Studies Foundation helped to make possible the events identified above as well as to support graduate student travel for conference presentations and for dissertation research.

Last, let me extend an invitation to all students, alums, and friends who will be at the 2005 American Studies Association meeting November 3-6 at the Washington Renaissance Hotel, Washington, D.C. On Saturday, Nov. 5, Iowa will host a reception, 6-8 p.m., in Room 19 BALLROOM LEVEL. Please stop by and enjoy the company of Iowa colleagues, teachers, and friends. I hope to see you there.

Lauren Rabinovitz
Chair, Department of American Studies

Wanda Corn to visit in September

From September 11-13, Professor Wanda Corn will be an Ida Beam Distinguished Lecturer at Iowa, sponsored by American Studies and the School of Art and Art History. Her visit will coincide with two major exhibitions, at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art and the Figge Art Museum in Davenport. American Studies is sponsoring a proseminar that will read Corn's major contributions to art and cultural history, attend her talks and meet with her, and visit the two art exhibitions.

The Cedar Rapids exhibition, "Grant Wood at 5 Turner Alley," will feature more than 200 works by the artist, many borrowed from major collections (including his most famous oil, *American Gothic*, from the Art Institute of Chicago). The Figge Museum's exhibition, "The Great American Thing," will center on American modernist artists' efforts in the interwar years to address a distinctively American subject matter and the paradoxical role that transatlantic exchanges, especially with France, played in it; it will also heavily rely on loans from major museums.

Wanda Corn is the Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor of Art History at Stanford. Her 1983 book on Grant Wood, *Grant Wood: the Regionalist Vision*, is the standard work on this artist, and her 2001 book, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935*, was awarded the Charles C. Elderidge Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in American Art. It is as much cultural history as art history; it's an especially good read as well (and visually stunning—hundreds of plates). Visitors to the Figge Museum exhibition will be able to see many of the original works that comprise the book's plates, as will visitors to the Cedar Rapids Museum those reproduced in *Grant Wood*.

Professor Corn's visit presents an uncommonly rich opportunity to hear and interact with one of the leading American scholars who brings together cultural and artistic studies, and to see first-hand the pictures that she has written so compellingly and interestingly about. For anyone wishing more information about the proseminar and/or field trips to the art museums, please contact: Prof. John Raeburn, john-raeburn@uiowa.edu

Congratulations

Ivana Takocova and Steven Williams were admitted to PhD candidacy; Rixa Freeze completed her comprehensive exams; Ulrich Adelt, Patrick Naick and

Kirsten Bland Walters held successful prospectus meetings; Deanna Thomann and Eriko Ogihara received the Masters in American Studies; and Russell Peterson defended his dissertation.

Kristin Solli and Eleanor McConnell received Seashore-Ballard Dissertation Fellowships for 2005-06.

Sharon Lake received an Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.

Amy Spellacy (English) won MAASA's prize for best graduate student paper at the annual conference (thus keeping in house this award that Iowa has now won 3 out of the last 4 times).

MEET OUR NEW

GRADUATE STUDENTS!

American Studies is pleased to welcome four new graduate students for the 2005-06 academic year.

Craig Eley: Craig Eley graduated in 2004 from Miami University of Ohio, where he earned a B.A. in American Studies, a B.Phil. in Interdisciplinary Studies, and a lifetime of funny ways to answer the question "What is a B.Phil.?" For the last year he has been living in Pittsburgh, his hometown, and working for an outdoor recreation nonprofit. His research interests include environmental history, consumerism, and popular culture, and he is also increasingly interested in internet media such as podcasts and blogs. So he has no clue. Things he will miss most about city life: Major League Baseball and watching the sun set behind a skyline.

Beth Marino: "I graduated from Harvard in 2002 with a degree in History and Literature. Since then, I have worked as a dance teacher, a temp and a waitress at the American Roadhouse, a job that led directly to some of my current academic interests, including: regional food and food trends, religion, faith and community, and the true and telling tales of diner waitresses. I am also interested in Paul Bunyan and other American heroes. My non-academic interests include dancing, baking, reading A. S. Byatt and children's fantasy literature and watching movies with my boyfriend Ben and his dog Pepper. I am very much looking forward to beginning my next great adventure in Iowa City."

Mark Mattes: "I am from Saint Louis and did not stray far as an undergraduate. I majored in American Culture Studies and English and American Literature at Washington University. In the five+ years it will take to complete the Ph.D., I hope to become too busy to remember where I placed my keys and wallet. My primary research interests writ large are the genres employed by professional and political cultures in the colonial, early

republican, and late antebellum periods. My fiancée, Ashley, is a freshly minted interior designer looking for her big break, and she will be making the move to Iowa in the coming months. Also, I am an avid fly fisherman. I encourage all fly fishermen and fisherwomen to contact me immediately. There are some excellent streams in the northeastern counties that require our attention."

Rob Ostheimer: I am a native Virginian, Richmond, to be exact. I graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in English Literature in May of 2002 and look forward to returning to Iowa City. My research interests include pop culture - more specifically changing trends in the music and entertainment culture.



STUDENT NEWS

Sam Graber was the recipient of a Mellon Fellowship to do research at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond for a week in April.

Brian Hallstoos presented a paper on July 30th at the annual meeting of The Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) in San Francisco. He was one of three grad students selected to present on the American Theatre and Drama Society (ATDS) Emerging Scholars panel. His speech focused on a Passion play written and produced by Chicago native Willa Saunders Jones.

Sharon Lake had a review essay published. The title is "Manuscript Collections: The Iowa Women's Archives." It was published in the Annals of Iowa, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Spring 2004)--but actually published just this past spring. The editor of the Annals of Iowa, Marv Bergman, described it as a "valuable guide to collections on the political activism of Iowa women at the Louise Noun-mary Louise Smith Iowa Women's Archives at the U-I Libraries."

Richard Landon presented a paper called "Sport Fiction and the Untellable: Cliche and Language in Don DeLillo's End Zone" at this summer's annual Sports Literature Association conference in Ames. Amazingly, he was able to do so without letting everyone in the room realize that he really doesn't know anything about Sport Literature. Luckily, the book he was presenting on wasn't really about sport.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Loyd presented at the National Society for the Preservation of Tent, Folk, and Repertoire Americana annual Theatre History conference in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa in late April. She received the prize for

best new presenter. She is currently working as archival intern at the Petoskey Historical Society, in Petoskey, Michigan and assisting in two museums and two archives. Enjoying life!

Russ Peterson completed his Ph.D., officially graduating on May 14, 2005. He requests that all address him as "Doctor," or alternatively, "Your PhD-ness." (editor's note: we will all miss Russ and his wonderfully dry sense of humor!)

Gyorgy "George" Toth successfully concluded his first year in the American Studies doctoral program. George has thoroughly enjoyed the pressures, pleasures and pains of the program, has acquired a few more grey hairs, and has written a number of new poems. He had the privilege to help organize and attend the IFUSS symposium on Americanization and anti-Americanism in March, to present a paper on Louis Kossuth at the MAASA conference in April, and to write a successful grant application for a friend for the International Writing Program. Popular demand is forcing George to diversify his cooking skills - but above all, he hopes that he will manage to submit a successful plan of study this fall.



Jane Desmond has been chosen as a CIC Leadership Fellow for 2005-06, and will participate in a year-long series of training workshops put together for Fellows from all of the CIC institutions. This should be very interesting, especially the emphasis on

"imagining the university of the future" which is the final goal of the workshops.

She'll also be speaking in Japan at Doshisha University in Kyoto this summer, and returned from a conference in June on "Global Studies and Higher Education" at the University of Illinois where she spoke on the potential for American Studies to contribute to the development of global studies programs. Another area of responsibility is overseeing all of the awards International Programs offers competitively for faculty and programs, which total approximately \$150,000 per year.



Michael Lewis (PhD '00) reports that Cassy and he had a daughter on Feb. 2, Kara Elizabeth Lewis. Mike has also received tenure! He and Cass

figure things will calm down a bit ... in 2023.

David J. Marcou (M.A. '78), a La Crosse, Wis. native, recently edited the group book, 'Spirit of Wisconsin: A Historical Photo-Essay of the Badger State', which includes the involvement of all eight living governors of that state. It is the ninth group book David has directed/edited. He also published his feature-article 'Allied Journalists Aim for Victory on D-Day' last year on the British Heritage website, and edited his group's 2004 publication, 'The People Book: Photo-Essays and Montages in Monochrome.' Both books were published by Speranza LLC of Kalamazoo, MI. He has also research, written, and illustrated a thesis for his Associateship Distinction with the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, continues to teach workshops in writing, and does freelance writing, photography, and editing. His 17-year-old son, Matthew, has assisted on many of the group books David has directed, and is an information technology expert for the School District of La Crosse while continuing to attend high school, as well. David's uncle and aunt, Larry and Debbie Muskat, live in Cedar Rapids, and helped him get through school in Iowa City during an otherwise difficult time (due to the divorce he was going through). He says his best memories were of riding back and forth from his landlady Mrs. Thomas's house on the hill via bicycle, visiting with his professors, commiserating with David Marc (Cohen) and Mr. and Mrs. Mark Luccarelli, and buying ice cream for Dolly McPherson and her friend Phyllis.

Dan Nathan (PhD '97) sends along links to two articles about him that folks may find interesting.

http://events.skidmore.edu/news/newsDetails.cfm?news_id=873

http://www.skidmore.edu/campus/college_relations/intercom/050321/news/nathan.php

Dale Rigby (M.A. '90) is up for tenure next year at Western Kentucky University, but is far more excited about presenting at this November's NonfictionNow Conference in his beloved Iowa City. Book recommendations? How about James McManus' Positively Fifth Street (2003), Joan Didion's Where I Was From (2003), or Ruth Ozeki's My Year of Meats (1999).

Yuval Taylor (MA '88) presented a paper called "T.B. Blues: Jimmie Rodgers and the Story of Autobiographical Song" at the EMP Pop Music Conference in April - it was well-received, and Robert Christgau wrote in the *Village Voice* that it was his favorite paper of the conference. You can read it at

http://www.emplive.org/visit/education/popConfPapers/Taylor_Yuval.pdf.

This paper is an abridgement of a chapter in a book he's writing with Hugh Barker, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*, which will be published by W. W. Norton in 2006.

His last book, *Growing Up in Slavery: Stories of Young Slaves as Told by Themselves* (Lawrence Hill Books, 2005), has been getting very nice reviews (*Indianapolis Star*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Seattle Times*, *Orlando Sentinel*, *Booklist*) and is selling reasonably well. It was a selection of the Black Expressions Book Club.



Patricia L. Bryan and Thomas Wolf, *Midnight Assassin: A Murder in America's Heartland*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2005.

Many Newsletter readers may remember the 1999 FF (Floating Friday) where Patricia Bryan and

Thomas Wolf presented their research on the Margaret Hossack murder trial of 1901. Iowa farm wife Hossack was accused of axing her husband in the head while he slept and while their children slept in nearby bedrooms. Hossack was found guilty, then given a new trial on appeal, and then a hung jury in the second trial led to her freedom. No one else was ever charged or tried for the crime. Bryan's and Wolfe's account was fascinating: for its revelation of the details of a case more ambiguous than clear; for Hossack's role as the source of Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* and short story "A Jury of Her Peers" (Glaspell was a Davenport, Iowa native and a Des Moines reporter covering the trial); and for how this singular case reveals much about gender and the judicial system as well as contemporary values regarding domesticity and the family. For anyone who was at the FF, the account was made even more dramatic when an audience member stood and said she had driven from Pella to hear this lecture because Margaret Hossack was her great-grandmother.

Well, a short six years later, Bryan and Wolf have published their story of the Margaret Hossack murder trial. It's an unusual book, one that I found read best in small doses at a time but well worth the effort. Bryan, a law professor, and Wolf, an Iowa Writers Workshop grad, have an oddly unsettling combined voice: the story is presented as though one is reading a detective novel, with the night of the murder and its aftermath the first chapter. Individuals are presented as though they are characters in

a novel, with narrational points of view allowed to Hossack, Margaret, the defending attorney, etc. But, yet, the authors wrap a tight control over the "story" by pausing frequently to contextualize, to highlight Susan Glaspell's journalistic role, or at their best, to offer legal insight.

Sometimes, efforts to contextualize the chain of events are glib or lame. For example, they haul out "The Cult of True Womanhood" and then ponder whether or not Margaret Hossack as an Iowa farmer's wife in 1901 could be covered under the rubric. It's poor history and comes off truly academic to try to wield Welter's claims about urban middle class gender norms of the 1840s as equally applicable to Margaret. All they wanted to say was that society would not attend to Margaret Hossack's complaints of domestic abuse because the society at the time expected her to be submissive to her husband and that he should rule the farm and family.

In fact, if this is one of the weakest points, it also leads to what was for me the book's great strength: its portrayal of Iowa farm family culture at the turn of the century. Throughout their description of the murder (and their description is graphic, detailed, and gruesome), the trial, the results, etc., they are continually attending to the settings, the neighbors, the jury, the particulars of the world in which the Hossacks lived. What they weave together is a portrait of how a farm family operated as the distinctive societal unit of an agrarian economy: they describe a familial close-knittedness that includes the married daughters and their husbands; they create a vivid picture of the distances between farms and what types of inter-farm or neighborly relationships cemented the community; one learns about the patriarchal roles played by individuals representing key institutions – doctor, sheriff, lawyer, judge.

In keeping good faith with Glaspell, whose story and play focus on the material objects and ordinary aspects of a farm woman's everyday life in the kitchen as the clues to her psychology, Bryan and Wolf use the mundane details of Hossack family life, the Hossack farm and house, the ordinary events of lives lived in the rural landscape to allow for a complex picture of Iowa life at the turn of the century. I found this American Studies-style portrayal both dramatically and methodologically rich enough to try teaching it this fall in the undergrad required methods course. Wish me luck!

--Lauren Rabinovitz

Fall Floating Friday Schedule
(all begin at 4:00 p.m. in 704 Jefferson Building)

August 26

State of the Department

Lauren Rabinovitz, professor & chair

The Department of American Studies, The University of Iowa

September 11-13

Wanda Corn, Ida Beam Distinguished Lecture, co-sponsored with Art & Art History (times & locations TBA)

September 30

Mutual Monitoring: Online and On Reality TV

Mark Andrejevic, Assistant Professor

Department of Communication Studies, The University of Iowa

October 14

American Genres in the Popular Music of Socialist and Post-Socialist Hungary

Gyorgy Toth (PhD student, The Department of American Studies)

Zoltan Pek (ELTE University, Hungary, and the International Writing Program, The University of Iowa)

October 28

@#\$%^&: Modernism and Dirty Words*

Loren Glass, Assistant Professor

The Department of English, The University of Iowa