

The University of Iowa

American Studies Newsletter

November 2004



"Electronic Communication and Its Discontents"

At a recent faculty meeting I attended on how to improve operations in one of the university's larger departments (not American Studies) there was a great deal of talk about the need for better communication. Members ought to be better informed, so it was passionately argued, about what its leadership—both in the department and in "higher administration"—was doing, and they also ought to know more about what each other was up to in teaching and research. You don't have to be around a bureaucracy very long (and universities *are* bureaucracies, although in some of its branches fairly idiosyncratic ones) to know that this litany is almost obligatory when a unit in such an organization is taking its own temperature and to know as well that it doesn't really indicate that the information flow has been deficient, in fact paradoxically this perennial complaint may reflect just the opposite. Bureaucracies have always generated a great mass of information, much of it of little moment, which is then rather promiscuously distributed so that recipients are inundated with the trivial and in this deluge they may give insufficient weight to the fewer number of important items or not even notice them. Thus, they complain about a lack of communication, when the problem may actually be an excess of indiscriminate information. The computer age has increased the ease with which information can be and is passed along, almost exponentially increasing its quantity and ironically exacerbating the sense of being uninformed about important matters that recipients often feel. What particularly struck me in this discussion, though, is that several people—and not the oldest in the room—said that items they received by email or with links to internet sites felt particularly insubstantial and were often deleted without being more than glanced at, if that, and that they paid much closer attention to information received on paper.

If you're reading this you're reading it on your computer screen because we no longer distribute our newsletter on paper, and I wonder if there are as many of our community reading it as we would have reached formerly, or if those we do reach are paying as much attention. We've had to make this change in format because of budget exigencies. Paper and postage are part of them, because our general expense budget, out of which we paid for the newsletter, has remained flat for several years even as expenses have increased, even if only modestly. But as decisive in making us adopt an electronic format have been changes in how our support staff is organized. Because of the severe cuts in the university's budget a central secretariat now services all of the four academic units in the Jefferson Building rather than each unit having its own staff, this centralization downsizing the building's total staff and eliminating some of the services they formerly performed. We reluctantly decided that addressing and mailing the newsletter is one of the services that we would give up because of the double-whammy of the postage expense and how this mandated change in the organization of our support staff meant we could ask less of them.

We hope readers in our community are as attentive to this electronic form of the American Studies Newsletter as they were the paper one and as interested in what the department has been up to. But we really don't know if they—or, rather, you—are or not. We want to keep in touch with our graduates and friends so that the circle remains unbroken, and we certainly don't want to become one more piece of bureaucratic detritus in your computer's in-box, adding to informational dysfunction. So if any of you reading this have opinions or observations about it please let us know of them, by email (*bien sur!*) to american-studies@uiowa.edu, by mail, phone, or carrier pigeon. We'd be glad to hear from you.

John Raeburn
Interim DEO

Congratulations

Eric Johnson, Shannon Kelly, Brad Parsons, Karen Smith, and Mark Warburton were admitted to PhD candidacy; Ulrich Adelt passed his comprehensive exams; Sam Graber held a successful prospectus meeting; Jennifer Pustz defended her dissertation.

Erica Hannickel and Brad Parsons were married on August 14 in Serene Lakes, CA.

Ken Cmiel has been named Presidential Lecturer for 2004-05. One presidential lecturer is chosen each year from the entire university faculty. This year's lecture is on Sunday, February 27, 2005 at 3:30 at the Levitt Center for University Advancement.

Horace Porter joined the American Studies core faculty as of August 1. Professor Porter now has a 50-50 joint appointment in English and American Studies. WELCOME!

MEET OUR NEW GRAD STUDENTS!

American Studies is pleased to welcome nine new graduate students for the 2004-05 academic year.

After a four-year stint as a member of the working world, Jennifer Ambrose has come to Iowa excited to return to study and the realm of academia. She received her BA from Hartwick College in upstate New York, and upon completing her PhD plans to return to work in museums and historical societies. Her research interests, though still quite malleable, currently include print culture, contemporary American religious experience, and the formation and function of both cultural institutions and national belief systems.

Wayne Anderson comes to the program from the Twin Cities, where he has been working in the retail and travel industries since the mid-1990's. Prior to that he earned his B.A. from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, with majors in English and history. His current research interest primarily focuses on portrayals of rural issues in film.

Levi Fox grew up on the Jersey Shore before attending the University of Virginia, where he majored in History and Anthropology with a concentration in American Studies. His Senior Thesis there explored contemporary cinematic and broader public memory of the counterculture and he plans to continue exploring popular memory of the Sixties while at the University of Iowa. He enjoys drinking peach Snapple iced tea, following baseball obsessively, and watching episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer for the eleventh time.

Richard Landon "I am a home grown native of IC, but went to Macalester (in St Paul, MN) for college. As a religious studies major (at the school voted most Godless in the nation, according to the Princeton Review) I looked at how people come to understand their lives as meaningful, focusing mostly on music, art, and popular culture. My interest is in how people communicate that sense of meaning to each other; how do people talk about art, talk about music, or talk about anything that is important to their understanding of themselves. Recently I have been thinking about the importance of sports (go Steelers) and the intellectual value of comic books (not that artsy stuff, I like the trashy comics with flying men and women in brightly colored underwear!)"

Betsy Loyd is happy to be a student again, after teaching at a boarding school in Maine for three years. She has interests in gender, early 20th century cultural studies, film, and other areas of popular culture. Much of her undergrad work at Colby College focused on wounded veterans' homecoming after WWII and Vietnam. Currently, Betsy is teaching in the Rhetoric department. She has moved to West Branch with her golden retriever, Mac, and loves to kayak and ski.

Cinda Nofziger comes to the University of Iowa from Laramie, WY, where she lived for the past 4 years. During that time Cinda received an MA in American Studies from the University of Wyoming and spent a semester studying at the University of Utrecht, Netherlands as part of her program. After she finished the MA, she worked for two years at the public library, with children and young adult programs and taught intro level courses in the American Studies department at UW. Cinda's scholarly interests include travel, tourism and constructions and articulations of national identity. She likes to play outside, and while she misses hiking in the mountains of Wyoming, she is looking forward to exploring the rivers of Iowa by canoe.

Matt Thomas graduated magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Southern California in May 2003 with a B.A. in American Studies. Though his primary academic interest is American film, he is interested in just about everything that has anything to do with American Studies. He can name all 50 states.

Gyorgy "George" Toth holds MAs in American Studies and English Studies from Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest, Hungary (both theses published), and he held a Kellner Scholarship to Bard College, NY in 2001-2002. He is interested in researching the impact of American culture behind the Iron Curtain, and the identity politics of historical re-enactors. George has also been involved in international education, and in his free time he writes poetry in English and once in a while cooks something Hungarian.

Lauren Clodi Whitehead is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, summa cum laude, with a degree in Language Arts Education. While at OU she was a rugby player, as well as a volunteer and nanny. Her interests at this time include print culture and the culture of childhood and adolescence, especially during the 50s and 60s. Lauren moved here with her husband, who is a first year student in the English PhD program, and a loud, orange, tailless cat. So far they love it!



STUDENT NEWS

Eleanor McConnell reports that "This past summer I received a couple of short-term research fellowships from the American Philosophical Society and the Library Company of

Philadelphia/Historical Society of Pennsylvania. These grants allowed me to spend two months doing dissertation research in Philadelphia. The APS and LCP/HSP are great institutions with vast archival resources. I encourage other AS grad students interested in 19th century American culture, print culture, history of science, history of anthropology, and (of course) colonial America to look into fellowship opportunities offered by these institutions. Philadelphia is a fun place to be in the summer, and it was great to be around so many other early Americanists!"



Jane Desmond spent two weeks in Brazil in June, leading a conference sponsored by the International Forum for U.S. Studies (see IFUSS report) and attending the meetings of the Brazilian Studies Association. Upon returning she took up a new post at the university-- Associate Dean of International

Programs. This position is half time, allowing her to remain half-time on the American Studies faculty while overseeing and assisting all of the university's "area studies" programs including South Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, and so on. In addition, she will lead the continuing development of the new B.A. major in International Studies which in its first year, last year, garnered 280 majors, and is still growing fast. Complementing the B.A. is a new, highly individualized M.A. program in International Studies offered through the Graduate College's Interdisciplinary degree programs, which will be one of her priorities.

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.

Jane reports that the learning curve is steep, but fun, and if the above sounds like more than "half-time," it is! In the meantime though, she is continuing to speak at a number of conferences, most recently a colloquium in September on "Hemispheric Studies" at Oxford University, and at the Society for Literature and Science Studies conference at Duke in October.

This November she will give the keynote address at the Hungarian Association for American Studies in Budapest, discussing the relationship among cultural studies, performance studies, and American Studies. She's really looking forward to seeing colleagues and old students there, after teaching at Eotvos Lorand University in 2001-2. And on the publishing front, a new piece is slated for the December issue of the American Quarterly. "As Others See Us?: Fetishizing the Foreign at the Whitney" is an extended review essay on a recent exhibit of artworks about the U.S. by foreign artists held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

Kim Marra attended the Association for Theatre in Higher Education Conference in Toronto in August where she presented a paper entitled "Queer Antics Abroad: The Starmaking Relationship of Charles Frohman and Maude Adams." She will be a participant in the Feminist

Historiography Working Group of the American Society for Theatre Research at the annual meeting in Las Vegas in November where she is presenting a position paper, "Performing Paternalistic Authoritarianism: Impresario/Actress Relationships and American Empire, 1865-1914." She and co-editor Robert A. Schanke have just returned the page proofs of *The Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy: A Biographical Dictionary of Major Figures of the American Stage of the Pre-Stonewall Era*, which is due out in Spring 2005. This fall she is teaching a new graduate seminar in American Studies: 45:230 Performing Arts in American Culture: America through the Theatre.

Lauren Rabinovitz presented a demonstration of "Yesteryear's Wonderlands: Introducing Modernism to America," her CD-ROM forthcoming from U. Illinois Press, at a session at the American Studies Association meeting in Atlanta, November 11.

In addition, she recently published an essay on slapstick movies and amusement parks in a new book anthology on cinema during the teens: "The Coney Island Comedies: Bodies and Slapstick at the Amusement Park and the Movies, 1903- 1917," in *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, eds. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Nick Yablon has just had an article published in the June issue of *American Quarterly*, entitled "The Metropolitan Life in Ruins: Urban and Architectural Speculations in New York, 1909-19." He is now editing the final version of another article, this one for a collection on the meanings of Pompeii in nineteenth and twentieth century British and American culture, which will be published later this year by Getty Press. While the other articles in the collection focus on literary and art historical adaptations, he recovers the popular pyro-dramatic reconstructions of "The Last Days of Pompeii" enacted around 1900 at various American amusement parks by the British fire works impresario, James Pain. He has, of course, had Lauren rummage through her amusement park research boxes in search of any references to Mr. Pain, however small or obscure!

He is now working on some new research topics, ranging from the significance of the revolving door in the early twentieth century urban landscape, to a study of Los Angeles' Sunset Strip in the mid-1960s, in particular one particular block of the Strip that appears to have been the intersection of an emerging counter-culture, incipient

efforts at urban redevelopment, and the Pop Art experiments of Ed Ruscha. He had a chance to air some initial thoughts about the Sunset Strip as a cultural and political flashpoint, in a museum talk given with other American Studies faculty at the University of Iowa Museum of Art back in April. And over the summer, he carried out further research in the archives of the Canadian Museum of Architecture, in Montreal. Nick is now planning a return visit, but perhaps not over the winter!

Rich Horwitz "I've published quite a bit, although far more of the "applied" than "academic" variety. So, I am now an Emeritus Professor of American Studies at Iowa, a visiting scholar in American Civilization at Brown, a Senior Fellow of the Coastal Institute (an environmental education and research outfit right on the water in Narragansett, RI), and -- catch this -- a "Marine Research Associate IV" (and thereby a member of the local NEA affiliate) at the University of Rhode Island. I've also been appointed a Fulbright Senior Specialist, this year to lecture and consult for two weeks at 4 universities in Poland. Among the things I'll be doing is delivering the keynote address to the annual meeting of the Polish Association for American Studies, on October 17. I've also received a grant from the US-China Educational Trust (an NGO) to help develop American Studies at Northeastern University in Shenyang, China for 6 weeks in the Spring, 2005.

On the academic side, I've had two essays accepted for publication: "Americans' Problem With Global Warming" will appear (or will have just appeared) in the (belated) Spring 2004 issue of *American Studies*. "Defining America" will be appear as the lead essay in a new Japanese textbook, *Introduction to American Studies*, ed. Yoneyuki Sugita (Okayama, Japan: University Education Press, forthcoming in 2005).

What pays the bills, though, are consulting grants, chiefly for research and writing to improve understanding and coordination among public policy makers, various bureaus (the ones who actually provide my life support -- chiefly, state environmental, transportation, health, and emergency management bureaus), the public, and academic experts of sundry sorts. So, this year, I've produced:

For the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management -- "All-Hazards Emergency Response Plan" (over 800 pages!); "Oil Spill Science Plan"; "Geographic Information (GIS) Plan"; "Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP)"

For RI DEM and the RI Department of Health:
"Procedures for Closure and Re-opening of Fisheries"

For the Coastal Institute: "Guide for the Rhode Island Oil-Spill Science Team"

For the Rhode Island Emergency Management Administration "Statewide, Interagency Emergency Response -- Hazardous Material and Animal Care (ESF #10 and #16)"

For the RI Department of Transportation: "Highway Safety Plan for Fiscal Year 2005"

Folks might enjoy seeing one of my more public-oriented projects, helping environmental scientists, resource managers, share their perspective via a website that I produced, based at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/bart/index.htm>

All of my research basically requires "doing fieldwork" (a.k.a. "hanging out" with) a pretty amazingly diverse throng: academic scientists, environmentalists, commercial and recreational fisherman, public health officials, managers and regulators, lawyers, lobbyists, heavy equipment operators, police, fire fighters, and other first responders . . . plus pretty random citizens who happen to ring the phone off the wall. Basically I get paid to figure out and write up their common knowledge and suggest ways for them to work together more effectively (a.k.a. "play together," even when all Hell breaks loose, like in an oil spill, hurricane, Anthrax scare, or whatever). This is now my third year of doing this sort of research and writing, and I find it both a great challenge -- to work on cultural interventions as well as criticism. Of course, I know that my background and passion for things messy and "ethnographic" is still unusual in American Studies, but I hope people will consider that there is much good work to be done in the sectors of the "real world" that I have come to know. And, I dare say, the work -- even when it pretty radically rocks the boat -- is at least as well compensated and, on balance, better appreciated outside than inside the academy. I hope that students in particular find this one person's testimony encouraging, and I'd welcome folks getting in touch with me, if there is anything I can do to help."



Kern Travel Awards

It is a pleasure to announce the recipients of the 2004-2005 Alexander Kern Travel Awards, made possible by the generosity of the late Professor Kern and his wife, Jean Kern. Professor Kern was the founder of American Studies at Iowa and chaired the Department until his retirement in 1975. Shortly before he and Mrs. Kern moved east in 1995 to be nearer their children, he established an endowment that provides annual awards to subsidize two kinds of travel expenses incurred by American Studies graduate students in their professional work. After Professor Kern's death in 1997, a number of his former students contributed additional funds to the endowment.

Two awards of \$250 were given this year to students who presented at national meetings earlier this month. The original endowment also includes one award of \$500 to a dissertation writer who has need to work in an archive away from Iowa City.

The 2004-2005 recipients of the Kern Professional Travel awards are Kristin Solli and Patrick Naick. Kristin presented "The Invention of Europe: The EU, the U.S. and Cultural Policy" as part of a panel called "The U.S. and Cultural Policy in a Global Context" at the ASA meeting in Atlanta. Patrick's paper, given at the MMLA in St. Louis, was "Domestic Disturbance on the Southeast Side" as part of a special session entitled, "Post-WWII American Regionalism."

The recipient of this year's Kern Dissertation Travel award is Eleanor McConnell. Her dissertation project, "Economic Citizenship in Revolutionary New Jersey, 1763-1820," examines the changing structure of opportunity for various populations in New Jersey in the transitional period of 1763-1820. This award will allow her to visit one essential archive that is in the Midwest, the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, which is a major repository for materials about the Revolutionary and Early National periods. Specifically, the library houses at least six major collections specifically about New Jersey individuals and families, and at least a dozen others that are peripherally useful for questions she is trying to answer.

The Kern awards support the important professional activities of American Studies graduate students and are an ongoing symbol for all of us in the Program of the

heritage, intellectual as well as material, that Professor Kern bequeathed to us.



Ilene Alexander (PhD '98) recently served as guest co-editor of this special issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and wrote a piece for the issue as well: *Women's Studies*

Quarterly. Special Issue: Women and Literacy: Moving to Power and Participation. Guest Editors, Mev Miller and Ilene Alexander. 32: 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2004). Alexander, Ilene D. "Building Literacy into Courses: Syllabus & Pedagogical Considerations (with sample syllabi by Jenny Horsman and Suzanne Smythe)." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 32: 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2004).

John Baskerville (Ph.D. '97). "My news is that I have just received tenure at the University of Northern Iowa in the Department of History. I teach African-American History, Race and Ethncity, etc. In addition, I serve as a consultant for museums, give several public lectures every year, as well as co-hosting and Producing a radio talk show with another Iowa graduate (Dr. Scharron Clayton) called Community Rhythmns. Our family has grown since we left Iowa City. My wife, Hiltje, and I have two daughters (Marissa 13 and Aja 8). I also play bass in a band (Checker & The Bluetones) as well as doing a number of studio recording sessions (Karla Ruth, Donny Brazile, etc.) I want to give a shout out to Frank, Matt, Derryn, Natalie, Ilene, Cherry, Brett, Leslie, Catron, Paul, Lori, Noliwe, and especially George Barlow and Jay Berry as well as Profs. Rabinovitz and Horwitz."

Sarah Fields (PhD '01) "I've left the University of Georgia to accept a Visiting Assistant Professor position at The Ohio State University in their brand new program in Sport, Exercise, and the Humanities. It is nice being back in the Big 10 and nice as well that my partner Dawn is also employed by OSU (research faculty in the Med School).

Also, I don't know if Dan Nathan will be too modest to say, but his book (based on his dissertation), *Saying It's So*, won the annual book awards from both the North American Society for Sport History and the North American Society for Sport Sociology. This is a rare double win in the field of Sport Studies."

Stephen Haven (MA '85) "I recently published a book of poems, *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet*

Smokestacks (West End Press, 2004). The book is distributed by the University of New Mexico Press. It was reviewed by *Amherst Magazine* in summer 2004, and will have another review this fall in *The Journal* (Ohio State University).

I have had two Fulbright lecturing grants to teach American literature in Chinese universities (1990-1991, 1997-1998). I have also received three Individual Artist Grants in Poetry from the Ohio Arts Council (1994, 1996, 2001)."

Jan Olive Nash (MA '89) has an essay on the history of Kenilworth, IL, published in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), just out this month.

She also has an article in the current (Fall 2004) issue of the *Iowa Barn Foundation* that explores the Old World antecedents of a northwest Iowa heavy-timber barn built for a German immigrant family.

Jane Simonsen (PhD '01) "had our (husband Mike Augspurger, PhD '01) daughter, Solon Magnolia Augspurger (yes, that's Solon as in Solon, Iowa!--and only secondarily Solon as in the proto-democratic Athenian lawmaker....) on August 12. She arrived two weeks early and made a very speedy entrance to the world--we barely made it to the hospital in time. Soli kindly waited until I had mailed off the book manuscript I was working on all summer, so I have been able to enjoy her company at home the last two months with no deadlines. She's been a joy from the start. She already has an Iowa sweatshirt and a toy Herky. Her research interests include milk, fists, ceiling fans and nature photography.

In academic news, I was in a roundtable with Megan Fritschel Nelson at this year's ASA, discussing American Studies in undergraduate Honors education."

Yuval Taylor (MA '88) "My book, *Growing Up in Slavery: Stories of Young Slaves as Told by Themselves*, will be published by Lawrence Hill Books in January 2005. I have another book in progress with Norton, coauthored by Hugh Barker, entitled *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. It'll be published sometime in 2006 if all goes well.

My research is currently focused on two topics: how Southern music in the U.S., which was relatively integrated prior to the 1920s, became segregated along racial lines into "old-time" and "race" (read country and blues); and the birth of autobiographical song in America between the late 1920s and the late 1960s (the prime

examples being Jimmie Rodgers, Woody Guthrie, and Lightnin' Hopkins). If anyone has any thoughts on these topics they'd like to share, I'd welcome them."

Robert Urstein (PhD '97) "After ten years teaching English, history, and American studies courses, chairing a department, and coaching lacrosse at an independent college preparatory school in San Francisco, I accepted a position this summer as Director of the Ph.D. Program in the Graduate School of Business at Stanford.

Believe it or not, my interdisciplinary training is an asset, as I am now running a program with 100 students working in seven different fields, including economics, political economy, organizational behavior, with faculty across the entire school and university.

As far as graduate programs go, it's a pretty good deal. All of our students receive full funding (tuition and living expenses) for five years, and although they are involved in faculty research and their own research, most students do comparatively little teaching, but they are able to finish in five years.

Stanford is a great place, and I'm happy to be down here. Shelley Fisher Fishkin, the President of the ASA, heads up the American Studies Program here, and I'm trying to find some ways of getting involved. If anyone's out this way, send me a message!"

Markha Valenta (PhD '99) For the past year, Markha has been working as a postdoc at the Free University (Amsterdam) on a project examining the politics of Western (esp. Dutch & American) responses to Islam within the West in relation to issues of national identity, democracy, and secularism. This past summer she helped Diederik Oostdijk, a former Dutch graduate exchange student at Iowa, organize the annual conference of the Netherlands American Studies Association (NASA) on "The Stories of World War II," where she also presented a paper on "How to Believe in America?" She and Diederik are now busy editing the conference proceedings, including an exchange between the two of them on differences between Dutch/European and American approaches to American Studies. Markha also attended an alumni symposium of the Salzburg Seminar in, you guessed it, Salzburg (Austria) where she delivered an informal paper on America's reconstruction of the world and the world's reconstruction of America. In addition, a paper on modernity's foregrounding of the veil as a political site presented at an international conference on "Political Theologies" in Amsterdam this past June will be

published in 2005 in an anthology edited by Lawrence Sullivan (Notre Dame) and Hent de Vries (University of Amsterdam/Johns Hopkins). Right now, Markha is also busy writing an essay for a Dutch literary/cultural journal on the failure of Dutch literary scholars to become public intellectuals and is organizing a panel on "Islam in America/America in Islam" for the International American Studies Association's upcoming conference in Ottawa. Anyone from Iowa planning to attend? In her lighter moments, Markha can also be found debating "Sex under Bush" at the university or playing horsy with her little daughter Elia (borne by her Dutch wife Jolanda Treffers just last year!).

Ningping Yu (PhD '99) left CIEE to join her family in Vancouver. She is teaching a course at Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University for fall 2004.

Events To Remember

The Politics of American Musical Performance, on KSUI's *Know the Score LIVE!*

Friday, December 10, 5-7 p.m.

Joan Kjaer, Host of Know the Score LIVE!

With performances by:

Dan Knight, jazz composer, pianist and Steinway artist

Dave Zollo, singer, songwriter, musician

Interviews led by:

Ken Cmiel, Professor of History and American Studies, The University of Iowa

Kembrew McLeod, Assistant Professor of Communication Studies, The University of Iowa

Kristin Solli, PhD Candidate, Department of American Studies, The University of Iowa

This event will be held in the Lasansky Gallery/Nancy and Craig Willis Atrium at the UI Museum of Art, 150 North Riverside Drive, Iowa City, Iowa.

IFUSS Activities

By Danielle Rich
PhD Candidate

In the summer of 2004, The International Forum for U.S. Studies (IFUSS) held a working conference in Rio de Janeiro, entitled "Looking North: Latin American Perspectives on the U.S. and Comparative Perspectives," which capped off a three-year long IFUSS project on Latin American scholarship about the U.S., funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The conference was led by Co-Directors Dr. Jane Desmond and Dr. Virginia Dominguez, along with Dr. Sonia Torres, from the Universidad de Federal Fluminense, who graciously acted as IFUSS' Brazilian host. Former Latin American IFUSS affiliates – all of whom have previously visited the University of Iowa campus to lecture, teach or research – attended the conference, giving their perspectives on American Studies in Latin American contexts. These participants have taught American subjects in universities in Cuba, Argentina, Chile and Brazil, in addition to the work they have done at UI and in the U.S. In addition to our IFUSS affiliates, members from IFUSS' International Advisory board attended, bringing U.S., Indian and European perspectives on American Studies to the conference's working group.

Hoping to create new lines of communication between Americanists working in Latin America, the U.S. and elsewhere, the project has continued into the fall, as the working group that was formed by the intimate conference experience continues to develop ideas and relationships across traditional borders of scholarship. IFUSS hopes to continue our Latin American project this academic year by creating a website as a tool for increasing and maintaining these lines of communication and intellectual connection.



CONFERENCES AND CALLS FOR PAPERS

Afrofuturism and Black Science Fiction

a call for papers for a special issue of Science Fiction Studies

In 1993, Mark Dery opened his "Black to the Future" interview with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate and Tricia Rose, by questioning why so few African-Americans write science fiction. In 2000, Walter Mosley wrote that everywhere he went he met "young black poets and novelists who are working on science fiction manuscripts" and predicted "within the next five years [...] there will be an explosion of science fiction from the black community".

In 2006, Science Fiction Studies will be publishing a special issue on Afrofuturism and black sf. As Dery wrote, Afrofuturism looks not just to "Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture" but "more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically-enhanced future." In addition to such sf/fantasy writers as Samuel Delany and Octavia Butler, Afrofuturism is concerned with appropriations of sf in the work of writers working outside the Anglo-American generic conventions and in popular music, fine arts, comic books, movies and other media.

Despite a number of important publications over the last few years, the sf academic community has generally offered little overt commentary on Afrofuturism and has continued to define sf in terms which are primarily white and literary. This special issue aims to enable a meeting of the sf and Afrofuturist communities.

Please address all enquiries, proposals and submissions to mark.bould@uwe.ac.uk. The deadline for submission of articles and interviews of up to 8,500 words is December 1, 2005.

Tell us what you're doing

As part of the Department's effort to find out how its graduates use their training in American Studies, we are eager to hear from you. Tell us about your accomplishments, your career path, your recollections of being a student in the American Studies Department at Iowa, etc.

Name/Degree/Year _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Present Employment/title _____

Comments:

Please return this form to

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