

DePaul American Studies

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Warm Regards From Our Director, Amy Tyson



For me, a highlight of autumn quarter always comes in mid-November when AMS 301 Senior Seminar students publicly present their quarter's-long projects. On Thursday, November 12, American Studies seniors presented on the limits of equality for women at the 1893 Columbian Exposition (**Peyton Lucey**), the domestic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright (**Lucas Brunetti**), the significance of the frontier in the video-game *Bioshock Infinite* (**Dan Potts**), and the use of memory and narrative in veteran-authored documentary films from the war on terror (**Joshua O'Connor**). Afterward, the student presenters gathered with faculty, parents, and friends at the farm-to-table restaurant Range (buffalo cauliflower, anyone?) to celebrate. Josh is featured in this edition of our AMS newsletter.

Earlier that week, the American Studies Program sponsored a public presentation and generational workshop titled "**Alternative Childrearing & the Role of Youth in Intentional Communities.**" Led by **Ma'ikwe and Jibran Ludwig** of the Dancing Rabbit Eco Village, the presentation was of particular interest to students in AMS 294: American Youth as Social Movement, taught by Political Science **Prof. Jim Block**.

Autumn 2015 also gave us opportunity both to welcome three faculty members to the American Studies Program Committee: **Prof. Bill Johnson-Gonzalez** of English, and **Prof. Carolyn Bronstein** of the College of Communications, and **Prof. Tom Foster** of the History Department, and to celebrate the publication of American Studies **Prof. Allison McCracken's** new book, *Real Men Don't Sing: Crooning in American Culture* (Duke University Press, 2015). Prof. McCracken's book should top the reading list of students and alumni from our Popular Culture and Media Studies Concentration. I literally just ordered mine right now, in the middle of typing these Director's Notes. As holiday reading, *Real Men* promises to pair well with this newsletter edition's feature on Prof. McCracken.



As we look toward the new year, I want to alert our students that this year the annual **Richard deCordova** Scholarship competition will be open for online submissions earlier than in year's past: from January 8 through February 8 (depaul.academicworks.com). All papers or projects in U. S. American Studies or U. S. film studies by currently enrolled DePaul undergraduates are eligible for the scholarship. Projects are judged on adequate documentation, originality, interdisciplinary commitment, clarity of reasoning, and clarity of writing. The scholarship honors and celebrates Richard deCordova our late, beloved colleague, a founding member of the American Studies Program, and one of the Program's most loyal supporters. Incidentally, we were fortunate to have Richard's wife **Susan deCordova** [pictured on the left with Amy Tyson] join us once again for our annual American Studies Senior Seminar Presentations and celebration.

Finally, thanks to **Prof. Allison McCracken** and AMS senior **Cindy Ramos** for their efforts in putting together this edition of our American Studies newsletter. In addition to writing features on Josh O'Connor and Prof. McCracken for this newsletter edition, Cindy also interviewed alumna **Jojo Pacheco** (class of 2013), who is currently living in Edinburgh and completing her first term as a veterinary student. With references to cats, crooners, and combat, this newsletter edition may well have everything.

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Best wishes for the new year,

-Amy M. Tyson, Ph.D.
Director, American Studies
Associate Professor, History

Prof. Tyson received her Ph.D. in American Studies
from the University of Minnesota in 2006.

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AMS Program Requirements

- 3 Core Methods Courses (AMS 211, 213 & 215)
- 6 Courses from One of the Five Concentrations
- 3 Electives Courses on U.S. topics, either AMS courses or university courses approved of by the AMS program
- 1 Senior Seminar

AMS Faculty: Dr. Allison McCracken



Dr. Allison McCracken
Associate Professor
American Studies Program

A very involved member of the American Studies Department for twelve years, Dr. Allison McCracken has always been deeply engaged and appreciative of the diverse communities of which she has been a part. Her roles as a student and educator have led her on cross-country and overseas adventures, throughout which she maintained an open mind and a critical eye.

Dr. McCracken grew up in Rochester, Minnesota, a conservative corporate town recognized for the world-renowned Mayo Clinic. As a student she was very involved in theater, particularly the local Young People's Theater (subsequently The Masque), a place where many of the towns' students, especially those less enamored of the jock culture so pervasive at local high schools, found community and the space to create. The theater was run by director Sylvia Mae Langworthy, who aimed at providing area youth with both intellectual and life training. Dr. McCracken began her involvement there when she was twelve years old.

"Sylvia offered inspiration, nurture, and opportunity; there was room to experiment but there was also a structure. She expected that we would be responsible, work hard, take care of ourselves, and put the production and the community's needs above our individual ambitions. Starring roles changed from production to production; all students worked behind the scenes as well as on stage, and many seasoned players taught classes to beginners."

"These structures and expectations were important in order to create the art that we were able to create, which was quite substantial. Sylvia was the first person who really gave me the opportunity to play an important role in mounting a production, initially as an assistant director, where I was able to work closely with and learn from her."

When Dr. McCracken was 15, she adapted *Little Women* into a play, which Sylvia read and produced a year later. The show was restaged several times and was one of their more popular productions.

"That was an extraordinary experience to have as a young person. It was very exciting to have someone say 'You can do this. You're actually good at this.'"

After graduating high school, Dr. McCracken attended Mount Holyoke College, a Seven Sisters College in Massachusetts. She majored in English and did a great deal of textual analysis, which she very much enjoyed; however, she was not able to pursue the types of cultural analyses she desired until her Junior Year, when she studied abroad at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. While she was in Canterbury, she started doing cultural studies work for the first time; cultural studies methods situate texts within their historical and reception contexts, focusing on the way in which media texts operate to both affirm and subvert cultural norms and hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.

Dr. McCracken employed these methods in her study of film, radio, and theater at Kent, and they became the basis for the kinds of media analyses she does now. Back at Mount Holyoke, her senior thesis was a retelling of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* from the perspective of his female "love interest," a project that decentered the male gaze to privilege a woman's point of view.

After graduating, Dr. McCracken was unsure of her next steps; she didn't want to follow her fellow English majors into the publishing world. She decided to do temp work for a couple of years in Minneapolis, in order to connect more with people on the ground. She remarked:

"I had never really felt at home in Mount Holyoke's privileged world, except for my studies; I come from a working class family. I also thought that if I was going to study social inequality, I had to reconnect with people 'on the ground,' so to speak. In many ways, I started over."

During this time she began working at a local movie theater in Minneapolis, and quickly became an Assistant Manager, which was one of her favorite jobs ever.

"I probably would have stayed doing that forever. I really loved it because the people were so interesting and supportive of each other. Everybody had big life challenges, not only financial worries. I really liked them. Most of them were young, college aged. We felt a sense of camaraderie in part because the theater corporate overlords treated the workers so badly; at one point we decided to work together and got our manager fired. Of course, the company eventually brought in someone just as abusive to replace him, but we felt a sense of accomplishment. And we could always go sit and watch movies all the time to deal with stress. There is a new play called The Flick by Annie Baker that reflects the experience of working in a theater during that time very well—it will be staged by Steppenwolf later this year—I recommend it!"

After working at the theater for about 18 months, Dr. McCracken was offered a position as a one-year intern teacher at The American School in Switzerland (TASIS), an international Jr. High and High School. She taught History, English, and Drama, and was thrust into an entirely new environment that was cosmopolitan and very wealthy.

Allison McCracken, continued

"I learned so much about this world at TASIS; I was often around students who sometimes had six languages under their belt. I remember this one Catalan girl who got some bad news, I think her uncle died. And she was weeping while everyone was trying to comfort her. All of her friends spoke different languages, so she was literally weeping and speaking in six different languages at the same time explaining what had happened.

I have always loved spending time in these different worlds because I love learning about things that I don't know, but I have also been emotionally very affected by these environments in ways I haven't always been prepared for but am grateful for. I made friends at TASIS with several students that I have been able to maintain through the years, and it has been wonderful to see them grow up."

When she returned from her internship at TASIS, she entered a PhD program in American Studies at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, which privileged cultural studies approaches to studying history and media. At the time, Iowa's film program was very well-known, so she spent a lot of time learning how to analyze media and began to focus on television and radio studies. She was able to interact closely with and learn a great deal from her peers.

"I was particularly interested in what was then called 'reception' work—analyzing how people perceive texts and what they do with them. Everyone responds to a text from whatever particular social context they are in, that's what the text means to them. It's different for everyone, which I found fascinating. I was very interested in the way people were able to do that as individuals and as groups."

Dr. McCracken's dissertation focused on radio crooners and their audiences, and this project became the basis for her newly released book titled: *Real Men Don't Sing: Crooning in American Culture*. The book highlights the most popular crooners from the 1920s and 1930s such as Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallée, Gene Austin, Cliff Edwards, and Nick Lucas.

[Read more about Dr. McCracken's new book on page 8]

Once she completed her PhD, Dr. McCracken taught Media Studies at University of California, Berkeley and worked at Temple University in Philadelphia teaching American Studies (both wonderful experiences, for very different reasons). In 2003, Dr. McCracken joined the faculty in the American Studies Program at DePaul and has been an enormous influence on the program and its students ever since. She is really excited about what many of the program's students have done and continue to do, and she remains in contact with many alumni. In the American Studies Program Review from last year, all alumni were surveyed, and there was a very strong, positive response from them; they reported being very happy with their time in the program and were very appreciative of not only the intellectual training but the great deal of attention and mentorship a smaller program permits.

Over the past two years, Dr. McCracken has started pursuing work on "feminized/girl fan conventions," which are especially inclusive of feminist, queer, transgender, and non-white perspectives. She is especially interested in the ways fans are able to do critiques of American social norms both within and outside of media texts in these spaces (she has written many short online pieces about these cons for the media scholar site **Antenna** --<http://blog.commart.wisc.edu/>--, which can be found on her American Studies faculty page). Many of the young women and queer people who attend these conventions are also on tumblr, and she is also involved in studying these communities and the manner in which public education happens there, the way people teach and mentor each other. As public education increasingly contracts, particularly in the area of the humanities, social media has taken over.



"The young women at these conventions are basically doing cultural studies and media studies work. They're doing the work that I would have taught them; they're doing it anyway. And a lot of them are coming from social media, tumblr specifically, where there are a lot of those kinds of discussions."

Dr. McCracken is also concerned with ethical issues surrounding tumblr, mostly regarding appropriation and exploitation. Many people who are not academics are being appropriated by scholars and not cited; she has talked to people on tumblr for whom this has been a major problem. Therefore, ethics need to be developed to understand and interact with people on these sites in respectful ways. Because tumblr is still understudied, there are a lot of questions that need to be asked about how to approach its users: how do we distinguish between public and private spaces on these sites? When should we quote or cite certain blogs? Dr. McCracken asserts that it is necessary to know the rules of particular communities, and understand that these rules are rapidly evolving.

Once again, Dr. McCracken's curiosity has led her to engage with new communities of people. She continues to bring the passion she has for learning from new worlds into her classrooms and into her work.

"One of the precepts of American Studies which I've always liked is that you need to privilege the world outside of the academy; you're always engaged in that world and you should never lose that sense of engagement and connection — so for me that is very important and I feel like I've been able to do that. Being in an urban environment and a diverse school has been really helpful because I feel like I've continued to learn. I make mistakes all the time, and I'm corrected. And that's important for academics, to constantly have that check on our own sense of knowledge and authority, because it's so easy to get insulated. I will never stop wanting to learn. I hope that my engagement in new spaces will keep me curious and involved. I always say to my students, 'You're teaching me as well. I'm learning things that are going on in the world from you, because I don't have your perspective. I don't understand the world that you're necessarily coming from, but I want to understand it because it makes me better at my work and, hopefully, a more respectful person...'"

Student Perspective: Joshua O'Connor



Student Perspective: Joshua O'Connor, Class of 2016

AMS Senior Joshua O'Connor (Josh) brings an international and critical eye to his studies at DePaul. Josh is originally from St. Charles, a western suburb of Chicago. He graduated from St. Charles East High School in 2005, spent two years at Elgin Community College, and then transferred to Columbia College in Chicago to study journalism for a year. After his first year at Columbia, he decided to withdraw from his studies for some time and in November of 2008 he joined the Marines. He was stationed at 29 Palms Marine Base in California as squad leader with 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, where he was trained in small unit tactics and weapons employment. During his deployments he participated in interservice training missions with foreign militaries and counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan. Josh was able to travel throughout Southeast Asia - Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and the Philippines.

"Being a Journalism student in 2006-2007, the news sector was dominated by Iraq and Afghanistan. I think I had this urge to go witness it myself, and I didn't want to stick around in school and see it through a camera lens. So I picked a branch and a job that would get me over there."

After Josh returned from his four years of service, he took a year off before attending DePaul. He stumbled upon American Studies on DePaul's website while he was planning his transfer. He figured his experiences abroad gave him a unique understanding of American culture. Since he had had experiences with other cultures, he felt he could look at American Culture with a more critical lens.

Josh is most interested in film and has taken various film courses. He recalled taking **MCS 348 - Topics in Film Genre: Bromance** with Michael DeAngelis earlier this year. They investigated "the Bromance film," beginning with the evolution of the buddy film in the 70s and 80s and working all the way up to the quasi-homoerotic Seth Rogen-type movies we see today.

"It was really enjoyable to see how the idea of on-screen buddies evolved from a rigidly platonic relationship in something like Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid to the more blurred lines of something like Superbad."

Outside of that he has taken a lot of American Literature courses including **ENG 265- The American Novel** which focused on American groups that have been marginalized because of their race and/or gender. He is currently in **AMS 298 - Topics in American Social and Literary Movements**, an English course focusing on William Faulkner, **AMS 380 - Television and American Identity** with Dr. Allison McCracken, and **AMS 301 - Senior Seminar** with Dr. Amy Tyson.

During the Senior Seminar, American Studies seniors spend the entire quarter working on a research project. They start by selecting a broad subject and narrowing it down into a single argument that is defended with evidence. This project culminates in a 20-25 page paper and a presentation to AMS faculty, friends, and families.

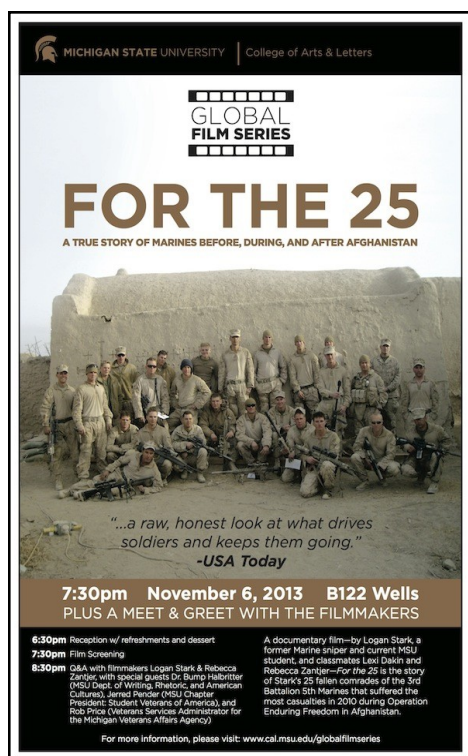
Josh is working on an analysis of veteran produced amateur documentaries, such as *For the 25* and *The November War*. These documentaries are free on YouTube. New technology like GoPro cameras, internet access in combat zones, and media sharing sites like YouTube or LiveLeak have been a catalyst for this type of media.

"It's really intimidating to start the course thinking about this 20+ page paper and the presentation to your peers and faculty. But I think the way the course focuses almost entirely on this single project throughout the quarter knocks everything into more digestible pieces and allows you to specialize each part. So you're not writing 12 pages in a night."

Josh argues the following in his thesis:

"Increasingly available to a public audience through new media sources, the veteran-authored documentary has surpassed the traditional role of the documentary as a record of events and people and become a means of sharing the unique mental and emotional toll of war. These individualized first-person accounts of war offer the American people a perspective on the costs and consequences of combat that has largely been unseen in previous conflicts. Although war coverage and the narratives that it produces still rest firmly in the hands of large news gathering services, professional journalists, and government organizations, these individualized accounts provide unique perspectives on experiences not available or not valuable to traditional media sources."





"These documentaries are not at all about the politics of the war, they are very much grounded in the individual narrative and the emotional consequence of combat. The easy argument to make is that there is a therapeutic quality to them; the filmmaker is not always on screen but the guys in his unit are and for them, to sit there in front of a camera and talk about their experience during and after the war is very emotional. There is a healing that happens there."

One of the things Josh has analyzed is the way an individual documents the war versus the way a news agency does. The elements of war documentation that those two entities deem as valuable are drastically different, so the perspective of the presentations differs as well.

"You can go on YouTube and get these five-minute clips of a firefight or an ID exploding shot from the perspective of a camera on somebody's helmet – that's very very different from anything that people have seen before. So I think that's a huge shift in the way people can perceive war."

As an American Studies student, Josh has been able to write essays regarding a variety of topics. For example, when he took **AMS 215 – American Experience: From 1941 to Present** with Dr. Allison McCracken, one of the topics of discussion involved memorials, like big cast bronze statues and sculptures, placed in different locations. What kind of messages do memorials project around them? What kinds of audiences do they get depending on where they are located? Josh took this opportunity to write an essay regarding a memorial bracelet he wears every day.

Joshua O'Connor, continued

"This bracelet is pretty inconspicuous, but when people ask me about it they don't know what it is. I show them and it's not what they're expecting. It's very personalized. A war memorial sits in a park somewhere, and everybody just jogs past it, because it's just part of the landscape. And that's fine but something like this bracelet – which I had never even thought to write about in these terms – the way I bring it into every classroom I go to, every restaurant or bar, can change the space and change conversations."

Josh has also taken classes with Media Studies and American Studies affiliate faculty member Paul Booth. When Josh took **AMS 395 – Topics in New Media: Digital Culture and New Media** with Dr. Booth, he wrote an ethnographic essay about "Twitch," a live-streaming, video game website. For this assignment, he spent about a week observing the community's activity on the site. He noticed and explained the social, economic, and cultural elements of this specific community. Many of the game broadcasters (streamers) conduct charity streams, which involve them playing a certain game for a specific amount of time in exchange for donations. These streamers on Twitch also receive direct donations for maintaining the channel. According to Josh's observations, there is a specific kind of social currency involved in the site. If a visitor follows a channel for free, they might see their name pop up at the top of the screen somewhere during the stream. If they subscribe (which is a five dollar donation), their name flashes up for the broadcaster to mention directly. Some donations even allow for visitors to request specific messages for the streamers to announce. Ultimately, Josh argued that even though the social aspects of the site revolve around economic exchange, genuine communities have formed around some of these channels.

Josh does not have any specific plans after he graduates, but his dream job would be to work in a museum of any kind. Many of the research skills and historical knowledge he has learned through his American Studies courses would be incredibly valuable for him in that line of work.

"There is a spot in American Studies to study absolutely anything you want as long as it has some role here in the United States. It is a small major, so you can get plenty of attention from the faculty. American Studies is important because we need to be critical of ourselves. It is easy to get swept into a very homogenous picture of America. You have to identify a flaw before you can ever fix it."

Alumni Profile: Joann Pacheco



**Alumnus, Joann Pacheco,
Class of 2013**

DePaul's American Studies Program welcomes students from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines. Joann Pacheco (Jojo) was able to take advantage of American Studies' flexibility to make the most of her undergraduate experience. Jojo graduated from DePaul in 2013. She majored in Biology and American Studies with a minor in LGBTQ studies. She is currently in the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery (BVM&S) Graduate Entry Program (GEP) at the Royal Dick School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh. She just started in August and is looking to graduate in 2019.

Jojo grew up in Evanston, Illinois and went to high school at Evanston Township. She received a full scholarship to attend DePaul on a Pre-Med track in Biology. She had no idea what American Studies was when she got to DePaul. She took her first American Studies course, **AMS 276: History of American Sexuality: Victorian to Present**, with Dr. McCracken and decided to declare as a double major shortly after. Her concentration was in Politics, Institutions, and Values.

"I had always loved history but I never felt like it was what I wanted to do with my career. I thought American Studies would give me a much more well-rounded education than what I was getting from Biology alone."

She felt that majoring in both Biology and American Studies gave her an academic balance that she does not have now in veterinary school. American Studies had offered her the opportunity to change gears and focus after spending four hours studying Biology. Her American Studies work also helped her to consider a wider variety of factors which may influence a subject's health.

"American Studies allowed me to think about the world in multiple and different ways because it forced me to understand how a psychologist vs. a sociologist vs. a historian vs. whoever else is framing their arguments. And then to synthesize that information in a way I couldn't get anywhere else. And I think that's the most valuable thing. For example, AMS helped me to think about more than just 'this is going to make the cat better because this antibiotic works' and instead consider additional factors in animal treatment that are social. Huge social factors regarding animal welfare are poverty, cultural differences in the ways that animals are cared for, and the need to provide education and access for the owner. One of the things that American Studies helped me to understand is that without addressing these issues you cannot effectively treat the problem. If the owner does not have the funds for treatment, then there is a limit to what you can do. I have often seen problems become worse (and therefore more expensive) because of this. In addition, you need to provide education to prevent these problems altogether."

After Jojo graduated she took a couple of gap years to work part-time in the field. The time she spent working helped solidify the type of veterinary work she wanted to do. For the first year she continued working part-time at a vet clinic she had been employed with throughout her college career.

She also worked full time at Animal Ark, an animal hospital and veterinary clinic in Chicago, from February to November of 2014. During that time she took on a number of bottle baby kittens, young kittens who have been abandoned or orphaned.

"I could not do it on my own. I enlisted my mother and brother to help me. My brother took the night shift and my mother took the evening shift. This went on for a month. It was exhausting, but most of them made it so that's the important thing."

In addition, Jojo worked with Tree House Humane Society. One day, they got a call about a hoarding situation: a woman had passed away and left behind a house full of over 80 cats (what she refers to as 'Mary's cat manor'). The woman's daughters were left with the house full of cats, and they lived in California, not in Evanston. They needed someone to come in and help to get the cats to and from the vet and sort things out. One of the people at Tree House recommended Jojo, given that she had experience caring for the bottle-babies. And that became her full-time job.

"I kept thinking it would be a part-time job but it definitely was not. There were 81 cats total. I found no-kill options for all of them. Cats were directly adopted; some went to a farm in northern Illinois. These were feral cats, some of which had no teeth. The farm owners were willing to continue to provide food including wet food, as well as continue medical care. Some of the rescue groups we worked with included St. Sophia's, Tree House, Evanston Animal Shelter, Purebred Rescue, and Chicago Pet Rescue (CPR). We also had a few outdoor feral cats who we did Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) with and placed back outside. There were a couple of cats who were too far gone and had to be humanely euthanized."

There were lots and lots of medical issues that I had to deal with. The cats in the hoarding situation had infectious diseases, including ringworm, FIV [feline immunodeficiency virus], ear infections, tapeworms, and diarrhea. A majority of the cats had severe dental disease including probable stomatitis - a disease that causes severe inflammation of the gums, which we did not directly diagnose as is standard because it involves getting a biopsy of the gums. All cats were treated with Revolution, which cares for ear mites, some intestinal parasites, and fleas."

"They were also given FVRCP (the "feline distemper") vaccine, rabies vaccine, and dewormed. I worked with these cats from November of 2014 until I left for graduate school in July of 2015. The last 4 cats were transferred the week I left."

Jojo spent that year applying for graduate programs as well. She applied to four US schools (including her top choice – University of Wisconsin in Madison) and applied to the University of Edinburgh on a whim. Once she was accepted into the program, she had to decide whether she wanted to attend a school in the United States or overseas.

"At the University Edinburgh, there is a higher focus on the welfare of animals, so all of our assessments are ethically sourced. We spend a lot of time talking about communication with clients and the public. There is a lot more focus on public health in general and there is also more focus on exotics (hamsters, rabbits, rats, lizards, birds) that you don't get at a US school."

She decided to go overseas given that the Royal Dick School of Veterinary Studies is the top vet school in the UK and one of the top ten vet schools in the world. It is AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Foundation) approved and recognized in the UK and the EU; therefore, when Jojo graduates, she can work pretty much anywhere (something she would not be able to do with a US degree). Jojo's passion for animals has motivated all of the work she does.



"My mother likes to point out that my first word was 'kitty' and my first sentence was 'I want to be a doggy doctor.' I grew up with cats, and also found that the bonds I had with them was often much stronger than those with people. My cat Calypso was an excellent confidante for all of my childhood troubles. As I have grown I have come to appreciate this bond more generally, and I know I am not the only one to have this connection."

Joann Pacheco, continued

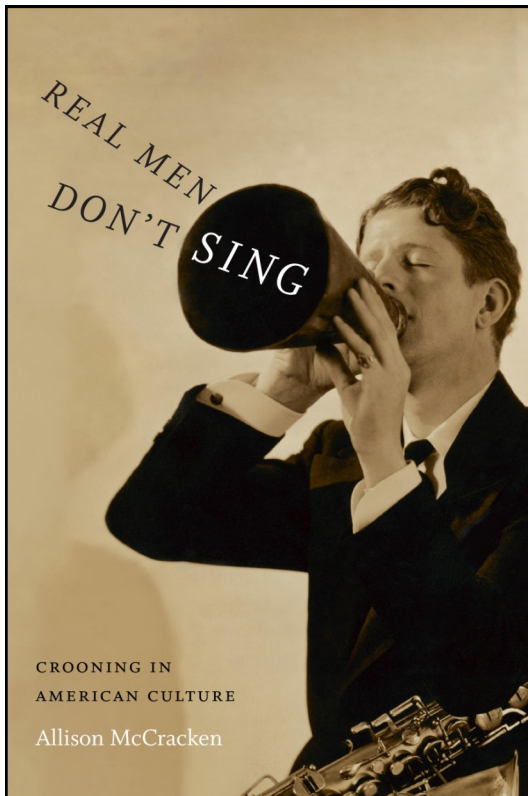
After she finishes her program, Jojo wants to pursue shelter medicine, a field dedicated to the care of homeless animals. She also wants to provide low cost care for other animals who otherwise cannot afford veterinary care. She will have to decide whether she wants to practice in Europe or in the United States.

"I think that the need for what I want to do is much greater in the States because we have a much higher euthanasia rate. Edinburgh is a No-Kill City, if you can imagine that. Chicago's Animal Care Control puts down, on average, 22 cats a day, and that's just one of the animal controls. I think that animal rights should come down to good welfare. This can come from good husbandry and medical care, but also a consideration for the animal's personality and the circumstances of the owner (or if no owner). All of these factors affect good situations for all animals. I considered all these factors in the placements I made for the cats at Mary's cat manor. Some of these cats, and certainly the hardest to place, were the many senior feral cats that we had. They provided a unique challenge because they were not socialized with people, so they were incredibly fearful around them. This makes it stressful for them to be in a home or a shelter environment. Alternatives to shelters are traditional colonies, but these have minimal amounts of care and are outdoors. The cats we found had been inside for a long time. So I placed them in a barn, which would stay warm in the winter, and the farm owners were willing to put out food for them. This way they were able to live out their lives away from people, with some care. My point is that animal rights isn't just about finding a 'good home' for every animal. It is about finding the best situation for the animal."

So far Jojo has enjoyed her time in Edinburgh by exploring the city and the area. She also loves theater and has attended a play at the Shakespeare Globe Theater in London in addition to those at the Edinburgh Festival, where she managed to squeeze in 28 shows in the month of August.

"I felt that it was my duty as an AMS graduate to go to as many shows as possible. Also, all of the museums here are free which is kind of like candy for an American Studies student."



Dr. Allison McCracken -**Real Men Don't Sing: Crooning in American Culture**

"Since the late 1920s, a crooner is primarily understood as someone (usually a man) who sings love songs into microphones, most popularly in recordings or over the radio. The current dictionary definition is, 'to sing popular, sentimental songs in a low, smooth voice, especially into a closely-held microphone.' But this definition of crooning did not exist before the 1920s, and, specifically, the advent of radio broadcasting. Part of the goal of my book is to demonstrate how this term came to be associated primarily with young male singers, romantic songs, and microphone technology. In order to show this, I review the various meanings of "crooning" from its first development in the United States (derived from Scottish/Irish usage) as a term to describe a soft low, intimate kind of singing... As I demonstrate in the book, crooning singing is the beginning of pop music. Before the advent of crooners, "pop" was considered any type of performance that was cheaply priced, commercial, and low culture."

Dr. McCracken specifically analyzes the way that crooners' mass popularity was perceived as threatening by cultural authorities, resulting in the construction of white middle class standards of masculinity for voices on a mass scale. Crooners were especially, intensely popular among women, which prompted anxieties about gender/sexual transgression regarding both: women's sexual expressiveness and assertiveness, and male crooners' corresponding "feminine" gender expression and alignment (which was quickly tied to homosexuality).

"When crooning singing became immensely popular, the term 'pop' narrowed to describe the particular kind of singing they did (commercial, generic, lowbrow in its mass address and appeal to women). I spend two chapters in the book focusing on Rudy Vallée as America's first pop idol... his commercial success and influence had to be contained through his artistic devaluation, the ridicule of his "hysterical" female audiences, and his perceived emasculation. This has been the dominant framework for evaluating male pop idols ever since, from Vallée through One Direction and Justin Bieber..."

One of the arguments in the book is that both men and women initially loved crooning sounds, and, indeed, the crooning style of singing in the 1920s was popular across lines of class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Vallée's original fan letters, when he first became popular over New York stations in 1928, show that he was popular with both sexes, and men felt no discomfort in enjoying his music. However, women were always more publicly demonstrative in their appreciation of Vallée as he began more public appearances, and they were the sole audience recognized by the press and promotional materials... Although the backlash against crooners stigmatized crooning forever, female fans continued to ensure its survival because it was (and has continued to be) very profitable; thus, crooners—pop idols—have persisted despite their cultural devaluation and those of their audiences. Without female fans, the pop idol would never have been born and would not have persisted."

Congratulations to our AMS Seniors for their 2015 Senior Project Presentations!

"The War They Saw: Memory, Narrative, and
the Veteran Authored Documentary"
-Joshua O'Connor

"Frank Lloyd Wright: Redrafting Domestic Architecture"
-Lucas Brunetti

"The Board of Lady Managers: Separate is Not Equal
at the 1893 Columbian Exposition"
-Peyton Lucey

"Go West, Young Man! Playing with the Past in Bioshock Infinite"
-Dan Potts



(From left to right: Joshua O'Connor, Dr. Amy Tyson,
Lucas Brunetti, Peyton Lucey, and Dan Potts)