

DePaul American Studies

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Warm Regards From Our Chair, Amy Tyson

Welcome to our January 2015 newsletter!

In July I took the helm as Director of DePaul's American Studies program. With this "changing of the guard" from the capable hands of **Prof. Allison McCracken**, we have introduced a new logo. Replacing our previous logo of Keith Haring's *American Flag* (1988) is a new collage that draws on a range of imagery to represent our Program's five concentrations: Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, Material Culture and the Built Environment, Media and Popular Culture Studies, Politics Institutions and Values, and Social and Literary Movements. From a Mark Twain bobblehead (Material Culture! Literary Movements!) to a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* poster (Media and Pop Culture!), our hope is that this logo will serve as a talking point for how DePaul's American Studies program prepares students to explore and analyze a range of American cultures through an interdisciplinary lens.



As a boon to our program's commitment to interdisciplinary study, in Autumn 2014, two faculty members joined the American Studies program committee: **Prof. Robin Mitchell** of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) and **Prof. Dustin Goltz**, of the College of Communications. Trained as a cultural historian of women's history (with specialties in France and the Americas) Prof. Mitchell's courses will no doubt prove to be very popular with our American Studies students. This Winter 2015, for example, she is teaching "Deconstructing the Diva," (AMS 295) which has caught the attention of several of our Media Studies and Popular Culture concentrators. Prof. Goltz also specializes in popular culture and sexuality studies, and we are delighted to feature his interview with American Studies senior **Mallory Ewart** in this newsletter. In another kind of interdisciplinary turn, in September, **Caleb Miller**, a DePaul graduate student in Sociology ably joined American Studies as our Student Assistant.

Most recently, on November 13, our American Studies seniors publically presented their senior thesis projects. They enjoyed robust attendance thanks to the support of parents, professors, friends, and the ladies of Chi Omega who were there to cheer on two of their sorority sisters, AMS majors **Molly McVay** and **Shannon Faulise**. This year, American Studies seniors analyzed hipster aesthetics (**Mallory Ewart**), true crime television portrayals of serial killers (**Clelia Sweeney**), Obama's social media campaign (**Shannon Faulise**), and multiculturalism in the children's sections of several Chicago Public Libraries (**Molly McVay**). After the presentations, a group of us gathered at Range on Webster. We celebrated our seniors along with their parents (coming from as far as Tennessee and Vermont!), partners, an alumna (**Megan Ashley**), AMS staff (**Nancy Leifker** and **Caleb Miller**) and several faculty (including **Robin Mitchell**, **James Block**, **John Burton**, **Allison McCracken**,

Gail Terry, and me). As a feature of this newsletter edition, we share an excerpted transcript of these four seniors conversing about their experiences as American Studies majors. The experiences of former American Studies majors are also featured in this newsletter. Currently, AMS is undergoing what is called an "Academic Program Review" (APR)-- a multi-year review process that asks us to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and to reflect on ways we might grow and change so as to improve academic experiences for students. One component of our APR research project was an alumni focus group, consisting of six recent graduates: **Caelin Niehoff** ('14), **Jojo Pacheco** ('13), **Sarah Ebel** ('05), **Katie Maranzana** ('13), **Sam Toninato** ('13), and **Renee Burdulis** ('05). Their two-hour conversation expanded on a number of issues that were raised by a recent survey of 59 alumni. While the transcript yielded 18 pages of single-spaced text, in this newsletter, we share a few highlights. For you other alumni out there, I want to encourage you to send us notes and updates, as we love to hear what you are up to. You can also stay connected to American Studies through social media -- we have a public facebook page (www.facebook.com/DePaulAMSPProgram) as well as a Tumblr page (amsdept.tumblr.com).

Finally, thanks to **Prof. Allison McCracken** and AMS senior **Mallory Ewart** for their efforts in putting together this edition of our American Studies newsletter.

Best wishes for the new year,
-Amy M. Tyson, Ph.D.
Director, American Studies Associate
Professor, History
*Ph.D. in American Studies from the University
of Minnesota in 2006.*

What is in this edition...

2-3 - Senior Roundtable Discussion

4-5 - Faculty Profile, Professor Dustin Goltz

6-7 - Alumni Focus Group Discussion

8 - Announcements

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 Senior Informal Roundtable about the Program

Recently, four current American Studies seniors sat down at the Lincoln Park Campus local café, Floriole, to discuss our experiences within the American Studies Program. Meet Clelia Sweeney (from Vermont); Shannon Faulise (from Minnesota); Molly McVay (from Nebraska); and Mallory Ewart (from Tennessee). At the time of this conversation, all four were in the process of compiling their thesis statements and projects. We informally discussed the program over coffee, tea and a few tasty pastries. What follows are a few excerpts drawn from an edited transcript.

Conducted and transcribed by Newsletter Editor Mallory Ewart

Present: *American Studies Seniors:* Clelia Sweeney, Shannon Faulise, Molly McVay, and Mallory Ewart.

Favorite/Most Influential Classes

Mallory: Let's talk over some of our favorite classes, classes that you wish could have lasted just a little bit longer.

Shannon: My very favorite class is the **History and Politics of the Vietnam War**. Oh my goodness! So. Good. Dr. James Brask is amazing.

Mallory: I agree, I learned a lot in that class, particularly about the experience of the war. I didn't primarily learn about factual or statistical information as I would have with a teacher who isn't a vet. Hands down the most amazing class I have ever taken.

Shannon: I was so intrigued by his stories. Remember the one about the bugs in the jungle? Never a dull moment.

Molly: My favorite American Studies class is on the crosslist and it was with Dr. Schlesinger, **Critical Perspectives on the Criminal Justice System**. She also has had a lot of life experiences that lend themselves to what she teaches.

Clelia: One of my favorites is the **AMS 215 Methods 1941-Present class**, a fascinating era. The class was full of majors and minors so we discussed a lot. It was the first time I learned about Built Environment Studies--



From left to right: Shannon Faulise, Molly McVay, Clelia Sweeney, and Mallory Ewart at Range, the host restaurant of the Senior Presentation Banquet.

shopping malls and Disneyland being terrifying sights of oppression-- which was fantastic to learn. My other favorite was the first one I ever took, **1960s Sexual Revolution on Film** with Michael DeAngelis. He is such an engaged and enthusiastic professor and the subject matter is thrilling. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe* was my favorite film we watched, followed by *Midnight Cowboy*, then *Easy Rider*. **Mallory:** I really enjoyed that class since that period is my favorite to examine, and I think all my teachers know it, too. When I've chosen all my AMS classes I have tried to relate them to the 1960s, if not specifically to that time period than to time periods that strongly influenced the counter [culture] way of thought so prevalent in the 1960s. One such class was my **Negritude and Harlem Renaissance** class with Amor Kohli. Truly insightful, eye-opening, and inspiring. I believe that's the most important aspect about college, one needs to take enlightening classes and AMS assists with this aim.

Defining American Studies

Clelia: Boundary pushing classes. One thing that I truly love about this major is being able to talk about really sensitive issues, like racism, and classism, all the topics people tend to avoid.

Mallory: All the -isms are discussed in every class.

[It encourages you to try and figure out how to pull information from multiple different places, that has been really vital to my development as an academic... It all leads me to ask bigger questions as I move forward in my life journeys.]

Senior Discussion, *continued*

Clelia: Right! It's really important to talk about it and it's hard to talk about it, but I love that this major *makes* you talk about it.

Mallory: AMS is super captivating because it points out all the obviousness that is apparent but not explained. We notice in our everyday American lives that there's something not quite right with this or that, then we deconstruct and dissect its meaning.

Clelia: American Studies is not about being crazy patriotic, at all.

Molly: I think that's something that confuses people. They question why we only study American history. Then I admit I have had very few history classes and tell them about all the projects we do in the core classes, like examining quilts or analyzing sculpture.

Shannon: Or examining high school and middle school textbooks. I once wrote a paper about how those texts portray Pocahontas.

Mallory: Well, it is really important to study American history, as we live here and should know our background.

Clelia: Also because all citizens are complicit in the problems.

Mallory: Another reason why it's so fun to criticize America within AMS class, because you won't get in trouble.

Shannon: Yes, I love that.

Mallory: Is it possible to describe how AMS majors think?

Clelia: I see it as being aware of everything.

Molly: I also think it depends on a focus, or an interdisciplinary lens.

Mallory: I'm really glad to have it as a foundation of my thought process and interests. I'm very thankful for the program.

Molly: Me too. I think the expectation is that you think critically. At the very base, it is critical thinking. It also encourages you to try and figure out how to pull information from multiple different places, that has been really vital to my development as an academic. Now I have a long-term investment in understanding the past, in a classroom setting or otherwise, too. It all leads me to ask bigger questions as I move forward in my life journeys.

Benefits of a Small Program

Mallory: Another benefit of the program seems to be the personality of the program. Everyone is very caring.

Shannon: It does help that it is so small.

Clelia: I agree. I love how I have gotten to know everyone within the program and department. I love that I get to know people.

Molly: In that way, I feel like American Studies is a hidden gem.

Clelia: In a weird way, I don't want the department to expand, because I like the small atmosphere.

Mallory: But as you mentioned earlier, those who are the odd ones out will gravitate here anyway. And as for us we're just doing our own thing.

Clelia Sweeney

- West Hartford, Vermont
- Popular Culture and Media Studies
- Interests includes: Writing letters, worrying, movie-going, cheesy popcorn, walking and ogling at everything like a perpetual tourist, piano, swimming
- Presentation Title: Probing the Public Wound: The Serial Killer Character in True Crime Media.

Mallory Ewart

- Knoxville, Tennessee
- Popular Culture and Media Studies
- Interests Include: Exploring Chicago via bicycle, eating, crafting, marveling at architecture, climbing trees, sailing, talking
- Presentation title: "That'll be \$25 for the Mustache: Defining Hipsters & Commercializing Cool"

Molly McVay

- Omaha, Nebraska
- Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies
- Interests Include: Reading, gourmet donuts, pizza, knitting, following political campaigns
- Presentation Title: Read, Learn, Discover

Shannon Faulise

- Bloomington, Minnesota
- Popular Culture and Media Studies
- Interests Include: Dancing, following political campaigns, election and media, making people laugh intentionally and unintentionally, Lady Gaga
- Presentation Title: #personalism in #politics

Faculty Profile: Professor Dustin Goltz



Professor Dustin Goltz
College of Communication

“Unconventional,” “intuitive,” “fun,” “charismatic,” and “passionate” are some apt words to describe Professor Dustin Goltz, who prefers to go by ‘Dusty.’ Born in Chicago, Dusty moved to Arizona at the age of 12. He remained in Arizona to receive his BA at Arizona State University, and then returned to Chicago to obtain an MFA in studio performance from the School of the Art Institute. This program allowed him to gain more laboratory experience in staged aesthetic and multimedia performance production, thus preparing him to teach more advanced level courses. After teaching community college courses for some time in public speaking, intro to communication, intro to film, intercultural communication and interpersonal communication he sought to earn a PhD in rhetorical criticism, performance theory and intercultural communication from Arizona State University in Communication.

After careful consideration, Dusty returned to Chicago for a teaching position in the College of Communication at DePaul. At first, he was concerned that the school would not appreciate part of his research, Queer Studies, particularly because the university is a Catholic affiliate. However, the entire faculty and staff immediately allayed his fears, as they were very supportive and engaged with his work. He claims that the enthusiasm and intelligence of the faculty is what persuaded him to accept the position. He has been at DePaul since 2008 and has recently received tenure.

At DePaul, Dusty works within the “Intercultural” field of Communication, the technical term for using an array of communication tactics. Intercultural communication is, “a major within human communica-

tion that looks at communication across difference, within and across cultural systems and how cultural context shapes the production of meaning [whether] performatively, rhetorically, [or] critically.” Formally trained in Communication, his studies and teachings are “rooted in performance studies, wherein theory is positioned alongside and through personal experience to promote critical dialogue.”

Dusty’s training, scholarship and teaching fits very well with the interdisciplinary design of the American Studies Program. Dusty identified “Performance Studies” as his specific field of study and the basis of his dissertation, which focused in particular on queer theory and queer media. His academic influences include several fields in the humanities, including sociology, theatre, art, English, and media criticism. A particular focus for Dusty has been media representation of the LGBTQ community, specifically “queer futurity”: “In plain terms, narratives of what the future might be, how we construct a ‘meaningful life,’ and mythologies of older gay males (predatory, miserable, isolated) that place queer men in a complex relationship to discourses of time, aging, and future.” His research on “the lived complications of gay future-building” has led him to analysis of gay male representation in relation to aging

Dusty’s own experience informs his work on gay male ageing. He was coming of age, navigating his sexuality and building a cohort of young queer friends in the mid to late 1980s -- the era of the AIDS explosion -- a time when gay identity was inescapably fused with HIV/AIDS. “I can isolate my interest to a singular discussion that becomes emblematic in a larger problem,” says Dusty, recounting one day when he and his friends took a cigarette break from their teaching about HIV/AIDS education and awareness and one of them asked, “I wonder which one of us will get it first?”

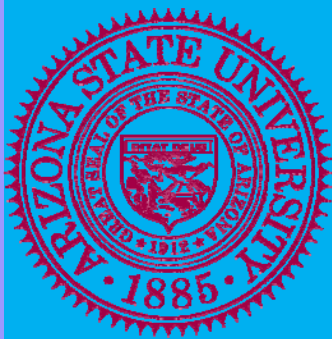
“This question really spurred all my research. There was this weird ambivalence towards the future attached to gay male culture that I grew up in and people were terrified of aging. No one appeared interested in taking care of themselves and in some way were disinterested of protecting themselves, mostly because they thought ‘whatever.’ The worst possible thing you could be in my friend group, in a weird way, was being 40.” Furthermore, “Reflecting on this period of time in my late teens and early

twenties, my research is driven by this attitude of predetermination- an assumption amongst my peers that gay men will eventually contract the virus. This was compounded by a growing realization that, even with safe sex information widely available to my cohort, they commonly engaged in unsafe practices and high-risk behaviors and friends were still contracting the virus. In order to further explore this fear of ageing, Dusty began examining mainstream media’s representation of older gay males as well as discourses surrounding the future for young gay men today, which he has found still constructs aging in ways that are very limiting and problematic.

In the edited book collection *Our Legacies: Writings from Chicago’s Older Gay Men*, 2011, Dusty presented an initial study of gay male aging focusing on a community based project at the Center on Halsted. He and some others worked with Sage Medical Group for two years and formulated a creative writing project to express various perspectives of aging. He also had DePaul students speak with his collaborators in order to give them a better sense of gay history and the prevalence of ageism and youthism in gay culture.

Dusty is also producing a number of smaller, related projects. He is currently working on a chapter for one edited collection that focuses on a gay character in the film *Beginners*, another essay about the television program *Glee*, and a third that revolves around the suicide discourse of young gay individuals. In addition, he is writing some pieces about comedienne Amy Schumer and her performance of stand-up, particularly in the ways her female body uses that space as a form of resistance and irony. Finally, he is currently awaiting the publication of the edited collection *Queer Praxis: Questions for LGBTQ Worldmaking*, which he edited with his partner Jason Zingshiem. They have been working on it for the last six years and it has involved a team of seven people and a total of twenty-three essay contributors. The book’s focus “brings together a diverse community of scholars, lovers, and activists to explore the collisions and collusions of queer theory and embodied experiences within interpersonal relations and society at large.” The importance of *Queer Praxis* is that it “serves as a model for queer relationality, enlisting transnational feminism, critical communication, and performance studies approaches to build dialogue across and through differing subjectivities. The theories navigated and extended in this collection have important applications for persons who may adhere to, yet always rub up against, the disciplinary structure of heteronormativity.” Dusty noted that because he has been busy for a long time with writing and researching, he really misses performing (he once ran a small theater

Professor Dustin Goltz, *continued*



company called Numb).

In his classes, discussions and coursework involve interrogating race, class, privilege, gender and power in order to explore the particularities of self-identity and the body's creative power. The construction of Dusty's curriculum is unorthodox compared to heavily lecture-based courses because he focuses on the skill-building aspect of "embodied communication in public presentation, the creative process and theoretical application." He feels that the "skill-building challenges" of the Performance Studies approach are important, "to look and explore how affect, space, energy, delivery and aesthetics of communication really shape and construct messages." Depending on the course, "some classes have students throwing over chairs, jumping on tables, dancing and crawling all over the floor." He notes, however, that a few of his classes are more traditional lectures.

One of his classes is a Special Topics course that is about the performance of humor. The construction of this course begins by examining irony as a tool for performing a cultural critique of American ideologies. In one unit, students apply political satire to produce a video project (to coincide with November political elections); the final unit is a pleasant wrap-up that centralizes community-building through comedy. Dusty remarks that the content of this course is unique to the Communication field because it explores "how affect, space, energy, delivery and aesthetics shape and construct messages." He mentions that his students do "really fascinating work" that includes, "interrogating whiteness, class, and gender, as well as the generational assumptions attached to millennials," all the while using humor as a means to express discontent and spark revelation.

This upcoming winter quarter, Dusty is teaching an introductory class on LGQBTQ studies and a performance studies class based on the communication and creativity of the body-- a prose, poetry, and personal narrative course. His third winter class is an LSP 200 course, the sophomore seminar on multiculturalism in the US. He focuses this course on communication approaches to identity, combining organizational communication, media representation, and performance art. This class is also an online course, allowing him to take advantage of what one can't do in a classroom; for instance, students compile a sculpture, at home, using a collection of pieces that describe a student's identity; students complete the assignment by uploading a photo of it online. They also create podcasts about the experience of public space. These

projects are very reflective of aspects of American Studies coursework, particularly built environment projects in which students reflect on their participation in a public space.

Another class that reflects Dusty's unique teaching style is the Performance of Race, Power and Privilege course. Offered in the spring quarter, this class analyzes the institution of social, governmental or academic hierarchies. In a previous term, Dusty assigned his students to conduct anonymous interviews with DePaul's teachers and staff to ask critical questions regarding how "race, power and privilege are really manifesting in this institution." The interviews are "not transcribed in a traditional format," as the point of the assignment was to absorb and reflect on the experience of the exchange. They then developed a performance based on what they felt and heard. Dusty notes that "students are asked to trust the ear as a research instrument." Rather than focusing the assignment on retrospectively dwelling on every detail of the interview and experience, he wanted them to truly appreciate what learned through "listening in the moment". Dusty feels that this is one of his most insightful classes, as it always provokes incredibly interesting class discussion about how privilege and racism are institutionalized.

One final exciting project Dusty is participating in involves colleagues in Communication and is focused on the media representation of LGBTQ people in Kenya. This group has an upcoming trip to Kenya this March and are collaborating with a couple of organizations, Ishtar (an organization for the health and well-being of gay men) and GALCK (Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya), to address the perpetuation of negative images of gay culture. He notes, "No matter how much time we spend critiquing US representations, in comparison to the blatant and state sanctioned homophobia in Kenyan media, there are clear privileges that enable the critical discussions we have in the US surrounding LGBTQ media."

Clearly, Dusty is very enthusiastic about his work. When asked if he has any advice for undergraduate students he says to, "give yourself some time, trust your path, and enjoy not having roots." He says, "I see people being pushed into a certainty to some sort of commanding defining statement of who they are, "yet Dusty asserts that as young students it is not necessary to be completely certain of yourself or to have some defining statement of self-identity, rather it will evolve over time. Such development is evident in some of his classes--especially his performance courses-- where he loves to "Watch students constantly discover!"

GALCK

Alumni Focus Group Excerpt

On October 29, 2014 a focus group of six local alumni responded to some of the larger issues that were raised by a survey of fifty-nine alumni from the last ten years. Recent graduate Caelin Niehoff facilitated the discussion. The discussion was transcribed verbatim and then edited slightly, to ensure clarity. What follows is an excerpt from that conversation, focusing on how these recent alumni perceived the relationship between their American Studies major and their jobs/careers post graduation.

Transcription by Caleb Miller, American Studies Program Assistant

Present: *Alumni:* Caelin Niehoff, Jojo Pacheco, Sarah Ebel, Katie Maranzana, Sam Toninato, Renee Burdulis. *Current AMS seniors:* Mallory Ewart, Shannon Faulise, Clelia Sweeney

Introductions

Caelin Niehoff (facilitator)-Okay, let's start by letting us know: when did you graduate, what was your concentration within the program, and how have you spent your time since graduation?

Jojo Pacheco-I graduated in Spring 2013. I was a Politics, Institutions, and Values Concentration. Since graduating I'm basically doing what I'd been doing before I graduated, which is working as a vet tech in the field.

Sarah Ebel- I graduated in 2005. My concentration was in Literary and Social Movements. After graduation, I did a Master's degree in the Winterthur Program at the University of Delaware in Material Culture Studies. I worked at a historic house museum as a collections manager for four years, and then I went to law school, where I graduated in May. Currently, I'm a staff attorney at the Field Museum.

Katie Maranzana – That's the most impressive thing. It's very hard to follow that. I graduated in 2013 as well. I was a Media and Pop Culture Studies concentration. This last year I've been working at a fair trade store and then two and a half months ago I started working at Centro Romero, which is a community center for the Latin American/refugee population in Edgewater and Rogers Park. I'm the family literacy coordinator.

Sam Toninato –I graduated in August 2013. And I was Literary and Social Movements as well. And after graduation I worked at a fair trade shop – the same one as Katie - and then I left to work at a law firm, an intellectual property law firm, and now I'm there.

Renee Burdulis –I graduated in 2005 from the program with a concentration in Media and Popular Culture, and I think I did a history minor. Went and started working at Starbucks – was there for 6 years. Decided it's a great place to work, but not for me. Went back to grad school, got my

MBA with the goal in mind to open up my own company, which happens to be a brewery. For the past two years I've been working to get into the industry, and I just got hired on to start up – part-time – a brewery. So, met that goal, which is great. Now the goal's to get hired full-time, but I'm their fourth employee, so, really exciting.

Caelin –I graduated this last spring, June 2014. And since graduation I've done a couple different volunteer research positions, and I am now seeking employment, while also applying to graduate school programs.

The Relationship Between an AMS Major and Career

Caelin Following our career introductions, how would you describe the relationship between your American Studies major and your current career/ career history/ career goals? Like, how does American Studies relate to it, if at all?

Renee – So, actually, in the brewery, their marketing focus is apparently Americana – I don't think they understand what that means. So I get to create my own position and I've just decided that I'm the communications manager and social media strategist for them. The whole reason that my boss hired me was because he found me on the DePaul career website, so he head-hunted me through that. And he really wanted my research skills, so that was the direct connection to why I got hired. And I do a lot of research on things because he needs to know everything about everything and every little detail, so that's where my skills from American Studies definitely correlate with the job I'm in now.



[I shifted careers and I still find myself falling back on skills that I learned in such an interdisciplinary program... so being able to fall back on that comfort and that adaptability has been very useful]



CENTRO ROMERO

Alumni Discussion, *continued*

Sarah - Well I started out being more of an academic in the American Studies sphere. My graduate program was in early American culture, so things from the colonial period to today. I very directly used my skills in that – I studied the social business industry of the late 1900s and early 2000s. Anyway, so that was very applicable, but when I shifted careers to do law, which is quite different, I still find myself falling back on skills that I learned in such an interdisciplinary program because you have to, as a lawyer, you have to learn quickly about all sorts of different subjects, so being able to fall back on that comfort and that adaptability has been very useful.

Sam – I've had two jobs since I graduated, and American Studies directly helped me get both of them, and is still influencing the path I see myself on, even if that path is not the most illuminated. When I got the job at the fair trade shop, I was taking a class on material culture at the same time. So I was learning about the commodification of culture and Marxist theory about material culture. So I went into that interview about fair trade and capitalism, and I blew their socks off. Because I was quoting these theorists that we had just read the day before the interview. So that was probably the best job interview I've ever had because I understood it on such a deep level. When I got this job at the law firm, it's because they were very impressed I've done work with primary and secondary sources, and that I knew the difference between them, and that I've used microfilm. And it wasn't necessarily that I was doing it in the job, but that I had gone that extra mile and – you know what I mean? 'Cause we all – when you do the thesis – you go and do a lot of research and a lot of work. And I really attribute all the work I do to American Studies and all the different interdisciplinary stuff, like you said, that definitely helped me get this job. And also yeah I'm not going to stay here forever, and American Studies really impacted my worldview, so I'm wanting to do something that's outside of that now.

Katie - That's so funny. I interviewed at Greenheart, too [a Fair Trade shop in Old Town] – when I walked in and we started talking about the neighborhood and various other things and I heard the word “gentrified” come out of my mouth, and I couldn't help it! And I was like “That's not an interview word!” And they were like “Yeah!” And I was like “Oh, thank god! Thank god!” So, yeah, I mean, when you come out of this program it sort of affects everything in your entire life. I don't know if it's that dramatic and sweeping, but for me it was dramatic and sweeping. And it's a worldview thing. Like I work in a community center that's not like “gunnin' for the big bucks!” so, yeah, it's about all of the social impact and everything I had learned about the four years before this.

Jojo - I've always been a little bit of an oddball for the American Studies program because I double-majored in biology, and I've always wanted to pursue veterinary medicine. But one of the reasons the American Studies Program attracted me was a desire to change my worldview, which is something

that the sciences really really don't do. So I kind of feel like one: it helped me feel a lot more confident in myself because I am more proud of my American Studies degree than my biology degree. And two, it's going to help me be able to project myself when applying to vet school. I've done research on both sides of the coin – both scientific and more humanities-sided. That has been the most valuable thing I've gotten out of the program.

Caelin – And I guess for me, as someone who *just* graduated and is still trying to figure out career stuff, I know that in every single interview I've had thus far, American Studies skill sets have been applicable. Specifically in terms of critical thinking and being able to really be expansive rather than narrow. I am able to apply for a wide variety of positions, whereas if I were like an accountant, I could only apply to accounting positions. So I've been able to apply to things that I really didn't think were directly related to my major. But because my major is interdisciplinary I can talk about a lot of things for a really long time. And I think just in general the whole thesis project, being able to work on an independent project and to present it and talk about it was definitely something that correlates with any kind of career I'm going to do. And then for academic stuff like applying to graduate schools, it's pretty directly related because the programs I'm applying to are American Studies or History doctoral programs. In the case of the history programs, I feel my

American Studies background makes me more of a competitive applicant because I'm different than what some of the traditional history applications might look like because I have a wider variety of academic experiences to draw from.



[I really attribute all the work I do to American Studies and all the different interdisciplinary stuff... that definitely helped me get this job. And also I'm not going to stay here forever, and American Studies really impacted my worldview, so I'm wanting to do something that's outside of that now.]



greenheart
shop

Autumn 2014

Senior Thesis Presentation Banquet

After the presentations, students, guests, professors and staff walked to the restaurant Range near the campus, selected by Program Director, Amy Tyson. Once arrived at the local eatery, hosts escorted diners (students, parents, faculty and friends) to a reserved room in the back, with a welcoming fireplace and bar. The dinner was mostly served buffet style; among the delectable options were buffalo-butter cauliflower, kale salad, vanilla roasted pear flatbread, and vegetarian and beef burgers. It was a joyous summation to the achievements of the quarter, complete with three choices of dessert to say 'adieu' to the autumn quarter: apple pit egg rolls, pumpkin cheese cake, or pumpkin cream puff.



Senior Seminar students pose with Professor Amy Tyson.



Meet Caleb!

In your next visit to the AMS Department office, please be sure to say 'hello' to our newest Student Assistant, Caleb Miller.

From Maryville, Missouri and a recent graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle, Caleb now attends graduate school at DePaul in Sociology. His current focus is Urban Sociology and Social Theory, although he may switch to Sustainable Urban Development program next quarter. Either way, he wants to focus his studies on demographic changes and population shifts of American cities, and Chicago seemed an ideal destination for such work. After enrolling in the graduate program, he sought a student job to immerse himself in his new campus.



Caleb likes being here: "Americans Studies is a fascinating department to be a part of," and explains that he, too, often thinks about America critically. He also feels that it is fitting for him to work

within his intellectual community, since Sociology is certainly part of the interdisciplinary culture of American Studies.

As a student assistant, Caleb is vital help within the department. Not only does he kindly welcome people into the department office, he also scans readings for classes for students' digital use, controls the department's Facebook and Tumblr pages, and helps professors and staff out in a variety of ways.

He admits, "Someday you may find me with nothing to do, so I'll be looking through Google maps- I call it the cheapest way to travel." His fascination with maps stems from a young age. He also aspires to work with the Pew Research Center, a think tank that provides the public with information about demographic trends and how public opinion is shaped.

The advice he bestows to undergrad students is: "Do your readings." He also advises them to, "Get involved on campus, it's how you can make friends and it looks nice on a resumé."

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