Notes from the Chair

By Phyllis M. Palmer

Following up on what Jim Miller called a “banner year” in last year’s Notes from the Chair, this year has been a “book year” for the department. Overall, the faculty published four monographs, a book edition of a special journal issue, and an important textbook: Chad Heap, Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940 (University of Chicago Press); Joseph Kip Kosek, Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy (Columbia University Press); R. Marie Griffith and Melani McAlister, ed. Religion and Politics in the Contemporary United States (Johns Hopkins University Press); James Miller, Remembering Scottsboro: The Legacy of an Infamous Trial (Princeton University Press); and Teresa Murphy, with Mari Jo Buhle and Jane Gerhard, Women and the Making of America (Prentice-Hall); and Phyllis Palmer, Living as Equals: How Three White Communities Struggled for Interracial Connections during the Civil Rights Era (Vanderbilt University Press). We highlight and celebrate these books beginning on page 14 in a special section of the newsletter. As for our two emeriti: Jim Horton added new scholarship on Lincoln in Hawaii; and Barney Mergen published a book, Weather Matters: An American Cultural History Since 1900 (University Press of Kansas). In addition, Tom Guglielmo is working on his next book as a year-long Fellow at the Charles Warren Center at Harvard University, Suleiman Osman and Elaine Peña are submitting manuscripts to presses, and Richard Longstreth is finishing up his next manuscript. The beat goes on…

The University’s central administration continues to support and sustain the department’s move into the top rank of American Studies PhD programs. Last year, the department was awarded GW funds in an internal research excellence competition, which enabled us to raise annual doctoral student stipends, and also to award summer stipends for research and writing. This summer, eleven advanced students worked on dissertation chapters and journal articles, for which some also won additional research and travel grants: Laurie Lahey from the New Jersey Historical Commission and John O’Keefe from the Cosmos Club Foundation. Doctoral students also received support for summer language study, theory “boot camp” at Cornell, and time for research preparatory to writing dissertation proposals. And stay tuned for next year’s newsletter in which we will feature a story on our own Stephanie Ricker Schulte who received the 2009 American Studies Association’s Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize for the best doctoral dissertation!

Our research excellence award also provided funds for a Themes in American Studies lecture series intended to spark intellectual conversations among graduate and undergraduate students, GW faculty, collaborating scholars at local institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution, and GW alumni. The February lecture by MacArthur fellow Camilo José Vergara (p. 10) and the April keynote by Alondra Nelson as part of the annual “Collected Stories” colloquium (p. 9) were made possible by these extra funds. For the coming year, we have planned a more ambitious set of talks and panels, funded by the GW award and partially due to a generous gift from PhD alumna Margaret Whitehead. We hope that many of you who live in the DC area will watch for announcements and join us to hear some of the latest and hottest scholarship in American Studies.

Notes from the Chair—continued on p. 2
Phyllis Palmer is retiring after 33 years at GW! Given that many of the last 15 or so were spent as chair of the American Studies department, Phyllis writes: “What an honor and privilege it has been to have the AMST faculty as my colleagues, as well as many friends in Art History, English, History, and Women’s Studies. And how lucky I have been to be able to teach, research, and conclude my faculty time with a new book.” As Phyllis approached the retirement age of 65, which is compulsory for academics in the UK, she saw the wisdom of a slightly-older English friend’s decision to retire so that PhD students might have more job possibilities. Phyllis concludes, “as I look at the talented young scholars being trained in our department, and the accomplished scholars we have interviewed and been fortunate to hire, I knew that I had been fortunate to do this work and that it was time to pass the baton to a new generation.”

Phyllis insists that “retirement” does not mean she’s leaving the University: “In 2009-10, with the new title of Academic Assessment Consultant, I will be working part-time with GW Arts & Sciences faculty to be more intentional about what and how we teach. This spring, I will teach a Dean’s Seminar on food politics and food policy. Working with first-year undergraduates, we will discuss what one does next after reading Michael Pollan’s The Omnivore’s Dilemma. What else do we need to know? Are there cultural analyses that might be mobilized against the ubiquitous indoctrination of industrialized agriculture and the processed food industry? I will also be presenting as part of a panel about American Studies teaching and citizenship at the American Studies Association conference in DC this November. I follow in the big footsteps of emeriti Barney Mergen and Jim Horton and hope my next years are as productive as theirs continue to be.

Notes from the Chair—continued from p. 1

The department’s expansion and rejuvenation continued with the appointment of another stellar junior colleague, Jennifer Nash, whom you’ll read about in the Faculty News section. Our success with graduating PhD students continued with Dave Kieran’s winning a postdoctoral appointment in American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. Alumnus PJ Brownlee was named Associate Curator at the Terra Foundation for American Art in Chicago, and Stephanie Batiste won promotion and tenure in Africana Studies and English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. And our most prestigious piece of alumni news is that Carole McAlpine Watson was named acting chair of the National Endowment of the Humanities in the first months of the Obama administration. But, as Jim Miller also said last year, we cannot be smug or complacent about our accomplishments—and especially now in a harsh economic climate amid reduced support for students in higher education. So as we continue to count on the support of our own University and generous alumni, we raise the bar on the department’s outstanding scholarship and accomplishments, and look forward to yet another banner year.

On a personal note, I became an emerita professor at the May commencement. So I wish a farewell to the department’s students and faculty, alumni and friends. I close these notes with a twinge of regret that I will no longer be part of this exciting enterprise, but with satisfaction, too. This is a great department and community—I was lucky to be part of it, and am curious to see what will happen next. Learning goes on...
Keren Veisblatt (BA ’09) was chosen as the GW Review's Senior Writing Contest Winner and has been awarded a scholarship to join Columbia University's Arts Administration graduate program.

Julie Passanante Elman (PhD ’09) is currently Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow of Gender and Sexuality Studies within New York University's Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. In addition to developing NYU's first undergraduate course in disability studies, Julie is also serving on NYU's Council for the Study of Disability, an interdisciplinary group whose aim is to build scholarship and programming that emphasizes disability issues and culture in the greater New York area. While she continues her search for a tenure-track position, Julie is revising her dissertation into a book and has submitted two articles to academic journals. This fall, she will present a paper at the American Studies Association (ASA) conference in Washington, DC, where she eagerly awaits a fabulous reunion with many treasured GW colleagues and friends. Julie and her husband Dave are enjoying life in Brooklyn, especially its brunch offerings, pizza, and leash-free dog romps with Scully at Prospect Park.

Dave Kieran (PhD ’09) is currently at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri for a two-year post-doctoral fellowship in the American Culture Studies Program, where he is developing a freshman course called Introduction to American Culture Studies, in addition to continuing his research. During the past year he co-founded (along with Ed Martini at Western Michigan University and Jay Mechling at UC Davis) the War and Peace Studies Caucus of the ASA. This caucus is dedicated to providing a space in which scholars can network and share ideas on issues related to war and peace from diverse subfields and across historical periods. The association is sponsoring its first panel on "Technologies of War" with the Science and Technology Caucus at this year's ASA meeting in Washington DC. This past academic year, Dave published reviews of recent works by Kate Nash and Sabrina Fuchs-Abrams, and the article “Remembering Lynching and Representing Contemporary Violence in Black Arts Poetry” in Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 41.1 (Spring 2008). He also presented papers at GW, “‘This Isn’t Vietnam’ / ‘This Will Be Vietnam:’ Vietnam’s Legacy and the Potential for Trauma in the Popular Culture of the “War on Terror,” at the AHA Annual conference, “Public History Competencies Survey: What do the Experts Say About Best Practices for Preparation of Public Historians?” with Kathleen Steeves; and at the American Studies Association of Turkey in Istanbul, “‘A Problem With Which We. . . Are Only Too Familiar:’ U.S. Intervention in Somalia and the Adaptation of Vietnam-era discourses of Race, Urban Violence, and Foreign Policy.”

Stephanie Ricker Schulte (PhD ’09) is currently Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Arkansas and was recently honored with a Robert C. and Sandra Connor Endowed Faculty Fellowship. This position is awarded to a faculty member who "provides the highest quality teaching, work, and service to the college." Her dissertation, which she is currently revising for a book, won the American Studies Association's Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize for the best doctoral dissertation. Stephanie was formally presented with the award at the American Studies Association's annual meeting in Washington DC in November 2009. She also won Honorable Mention for the American Journalism Historians Association's 2009 Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize. She published articles this year in the Journal of Television and New Media and Journal of Transnational American Studies. Her article on the "self-colonization" of Europe via the internet is available online at http://escholarship.org/uc/aegcce_iatas Stephanie, her husband Bret, and daughter Ava are enjoying their new lives in Arkansas and, in particular, their vegetable garden.

We welcome news and updates from students and alumni. Please direct correspondence to:

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Our newsletter reaches over 1,000 recipients annually—which is a tribute to the strength of our program. The downside, however, is the enormous amount of paper used (and postage paid!) to send the newsletter to so many readers. Therefore, we are stepping up our efforts to help keep GW green by issuing an electronic version of our newsletter. If you would like to be added to our electronic mailing list, just send your current e-mail address to amst@gwu.edu. We will also be issuing a limited number of print newsletters. If you would like print copies, please send your request to amst@gwu.edu.
The American Studies Department extends a special thanks to our generous donors this academic year:

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If we have accidentally omitted your name, please accept our apologies and our sincere thanks for your generosity.
Charles Basden, Jr. (BA ’08) was presented the 2009 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award in recognition for his significant contributions to GW and the DC community, dedication to public service, and outstanding leadership. As reported in the 1/21/09 issue of GW News, “All five honorees demonstrate an exceptional commitment to service and espouse the values that Dr. King represented.” The award winners honor Dr. King’s “dream” through their selfless contributions to the GW campus, community service, leadership, and scholarship. A native of Newark, NJ, Charles is now pursuing a master’s degree in public administration. As an undergraduate, he served as president of the Black Student Union and was instrumental in creating the “Stop the Hate Campaign” on campus.

Laura Cook Kenna (PhD ’08) has been busy teaching courses at GW on the history of American film. She recently published an article in The Velvet Light Trap on 60s TV and censorship efforts entitled, "Exemplary Consumer-Citizens and Protective State Stewards: How Reformers Shaped Censorship Outcomes Regarding The Untouchables" (issued Spring 2009, available via Project Muse). Laura will be teaching four courses at GW in American Studies this coming year as a Visiting Assistant Professor. This fall, she is featured in a seminar series at CUNY Queen's John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, delivering a lecture on the historical impact of media theory on ethnic anti-defamation protests. Laura has also been awarded one of the three Gaming Research Fellowships at the Center for Gaming Research at UNLV University Libraries.

James Zarsadiaz (BA ’08) completed his first year as a doctoral student in US History at Northwestern University. This past year, he presented research on gentrification in Washington, DC’s Chinatown (his American Studies undergrad thesis) at the Association for Asian American Studies, the California American Studies Association, and at the Chicago Graduate Student History Conference. This summer, he presented “Negotiating Space, Forming Identity: Post-65 Filipino American Immigrant Nurses in Chicago,” an oral history and ethnographic paper on the centrality of imagined and physical space in the raising of a Filipino American consciousness and identity. James is now TA-ing classes on Asian American Studies and Urban History, and currently researching the history of Filipino collegiate organizations, culture shows, and the performance of “Filipinoness.” James thanks GW American Studies for training him in interdisciplinary work, and still reminisces his days as an undergrad with the rest of the “08 AMST posse.”

Yusuke Torii (PhD ’07) writes that he has finally found a full-time position near his hometown Kyoto, Japan. Last April he was appointed Associate Professor of Foreign Studies at Setsunan University, located in Osaka, Japan.

Peter “PJ” Brownlee (PhD ’05) has been named Associate Curator at the Terra Foundation for American Art in Chicago, where he organized the exhibition "Manifest Destiny/ Manifest Responsibility: Environmentalism and the Art of the American Landscape." PJ specializes in 19th and early 20th century art and visual culture. He is currently researching paintings by Frederic Church and John La Farge. He recently organized the symposium, "What's Modern About American Art, 1900-1930," in Chicago and Milwaukee and is currently completing a manuscript, tentatively titled The Economy of the Eyes: Print Culture, Painting, and Perception in Antebellum America, under contract with the University of Pennsylvania Press. Recent publications include "On a Perpetual Holiday: The Art of William Glackens after the Eight," in the exhibition catalogue, The Eight and American Modernisms, edited by Elizabeth Kennedy; a short article "Color Theory and the Perception of Art" as part of a special issue of American Art (Summer 2009) dedicated to intersections between art and science; and "Ophthalmology, Popular Physiology and the Market Revolution in Vision, 1800-1850" in the Journal of the Early Republic.

Jason Steinhauer (BA ’02) spent the last two years as research historian and assistant curator for the "Lincoln and New York" exhibition opening at the New-York Historical Society in October. This major exhibit is New York's contribution to the Lincoln Bicentennial. For more info visit: https://www.nyhistory.org/web/default.php?section=exhibits_collections&page=exhibit_detail&id=683588

Amy Sussman (BA ’98) is a freelance photographer in New York City. Last November, she sent us a link to her photos of election night taken while she was out-and-about on the streets of NYC, mainly in Times Square and Union Square. You can view her photos in the section entitled, “Yes We Did!” at http://amyssuman.wordpress.com/2008/11. On her website, she writes, “I got my first camera in second grade. It was a Polaroid. I was hooked. To me, photography is intrinsic and visceral. Simply put, it is who I am.” In addition to assignment based entertainment news, she also photographs feature stories, news, and travel assignments for both Getty Images and Corbis. For more on Amy, go to http://amyssuman.wordpress.com/ or http://www.amyssuman.net/

Scott Suter (PhD ’94) has been granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor of English and American Studies at Bridgewater College in Bridgewater, Virginia.
Alumni News (cont’d)

Andrea Foster (PhD ’93) continues to live in Germantown, MD with husband Steve Katz, and son Alex, now in 10th grade (who was only 10 days old when Andrea crossed the stage to receive her diploma). Andrea taught history at Montgomery College in the mid-1990s, shifted into Jewish education, trained as a cantorial soloist and is now a rabbinc student in ALEPH, the Alliance for Jewish Renewal. This fall she is taking a course with Rabbi Max Ticktin, whose office is next door to American Studies in the Religion Department. Andrea is a Jewish educator in local communities, provides musical programs, leads davvening (praying services), workshops, and B’nai Mitzvah services. She hopes to connect with anyone interested in her field at avglrchl@aol.com.

Regina Lee Blaszczyk (MA ’87) lives in Philadelphia where she is affiliated with the Dept. of the History and Sociology of Science at the U. of Pennsylvania and an adjunct professor in Public History at Rutgers U. In recent years, she has published three books: Producing Fashion: Commerce, Culture, and Consumers (U. of Pennsylvania Press); American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV (The American History Series); and Rohm and Haas: A Century of Innovation (U. of Pennsylvania Press). In 2008, she was awarded the Harold F. Williamson Prize for mid-career achievement by the Business History Conference. She serves on the advisory boards of Enterprise and Society and the Journal of Design History. She is currently a visiting scholar at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, working on two new books, one on the history of commercial color, and the second on the cultural meaning of synthetic fibers. For more, go to: www.imaginingconsumers.com

Noralee Frankel (PhD ’83) finished Stripping Gypsy: The Life of Gypsy Rose Lee, her most recent manuscript published by Oxford University Press this spring. This biography places Lee's life in social and political context while detailing a fascinating entertainment career—one in which Gypsy Rose created and recreated her own identity to fit changing times. For more information, go to: http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/HistoryAmerican/Women/?view=usa&sftoocc&ci=9780195368031

Carole McAlpine Watson (PhD ’78) has been appointed Acting Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Carole has served on the endowment’s staff since the early 1990s, most recently as assistant chairman for partnership and national affairs. She earned a doctorate in American cultural history at GW and is the author of Prologue: The Novels of Black American Women, 1891-1965. For more, go to: http://www.neh.gov/news/archive/20090210.html

Loren Ghiglione (PhD ’76) has published a biography of CBS correspondent Don Hollenbeck, CBS’s Don Hollenbeck: An Honest Reporter in the Age of McCarthyism (Columbia U. Press) and a collection of Hollenbeck’s best press criticism, Radio’s Revolution: Don Hollenbeck’s CBS Views the Press (U. of Nebraska Press). See also the New York Times article, “Remembering a Forgotten Newsman.” Loren has recently served as Dean of Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism (2001-06) and is now the Richard A. Schwarzlose Professor of Media Ethics at Medill.

AMST Serving the Community

In our second year supporting the AIDS Walk Washington in October 2008 the AMSTeam raised $1395 benefiting DC’s Whitman-Walker Clinic. Many thanks to Amber Wiley for organizing the team, and congratulations to all of our dedicated power walkers!

Above, left to right: Elaine Peña, José Muñoz, Charity Fox, Ramzi Fawaz, Sandra Heard, Brian Boettger, Eve Errickson, and Amber Wiley

The AMSTeam walking…and look who’s talking?!

Elaine, Charity, Amber, and Sandra enjoy some quality face time with DC Mayor Adrian Fenty
A quick note to brag about our PhD students in American Studies. A total of nine doctoral candidates—over one-third of our PhD students—were accepted to chair panels and/or present papers based on their dissertation and seminar paper research at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA) in Albuquerque, NM. In a department as small as ours, this is a remarkable achievement. We are extremely pleased with the extraordinary level of performance of our PhD students and believe that their scholarly recognition is evidence that, along with GW’s increased funding and commitment to the program, we are establishing ourselves as one of the top American Studies departments in the country.

Katie Brian presented her paper, “The Sound of Authority: Hallucinatory Aural Culture and Aural Observation at the Government Hospital for the Insane, 1895-1905,” at the Southern American Studies Association conference, held in February 2009 at George Mason U. in Fairfax County, VA.

Emily Dufton presented two papers this past year: "The Meaningless Mob: Flash Mobs, Slash Mobs, and What They (Don’t) Mean" at the Southern American Studies Association conference in February 2009 at George Mason U.; and "The Meaningless Mob: Flash Mobs, Slash Mobs, and This American Life" at the PCA/ACA Conference in New Orleans in April.

Ramzi Fawaz presented his paper, "Marvelous Corpse: The National Body and Iconic Death in the American Superhero Comic Book" at the ASA Conference in Albuquerque, NM. The paper was presented as part of a panel he co-organized, "The State of Comix: Cultural Identity, The Nation, and the Visual Politics of American Comics," which was sponsored by the Visual Studies Caucus. This past spring, Ramzi taught his first UW20 course entitled "Three Hollywood Stars: Shirley Temple, Judy Garland, and Marilyn Monroe." Armed with a stack of comics, he spent the summer conducting archival research, and drafting and revising the first two chapters of his dissertation.

Charity Fox was selected as one of this year’s winners of the Phillip Amsterdam Graduate Teaching Assistant Award for Outstanding Teaching. She has enjoyed designing and teaching her own classes for the past two years. In addition to refining her “History of Cool” writing course, she created a new WID course, “The Veteran Returns”—a class that included four recent veterans who shared their military and veteran experiences. Charity is also working on her dissertation, which examines representations of mercenaries in American popular culture. This past year’s paper presentations included, “Dramatizing (Non)Fiction: Embedded Journalists Write the New War Memoirs,” presented at the Northeast MLA conference in Boston; “Recycling the Mercenary Figure: Civilian Contractors and U.S. Imperialism,” at the “America After Bush” meeting of the Chesapeake ASA, George Mason U., Fairfax, VA; and "Magnum vs. Rambo: Benevolent Vietnam Veterans in 1980’s Television," at the Cultural Studies Association annual meeting, Kansas City, MO. Her recent paper, "The Best Sellers of Hard Times: Poverty and Starvation in Gone with the Wind and The Grapes of Wrath," was published in "The River is a Strong Brown God": Iconic Places and Characters in 20th Century American Cultures (St. Cloud, MN, 2008).


Matt Kohlstedt is working on his dissertation about American scholarship on the Middle East. During World War II, the US sought authorities on the Middle East to make sense of the region. The government turned to a cadre of archeologists and anthropologists who had taken part in museum and university expeditions during the 1920s and 30s. Matt will examine how the cultural knowledge of the Middle East accumulated during these earlier excursions influenced the policy recommendations that they made during the war. He will present some of his early findings at the OAH conference in Spring 2010.

Laurie Lahey has been honored with a Smith Fellowship from the New Jersey Historical Commission. This funding will contribute to her dissertation research on the role of interracial coalitions in the urban North during the civil rights movement.


Grad Student News—continued on next page

AMST “Trebek Fund” Winner

Matt Kohlstedt wowed the competition in a significant run last fall on the ever popular, always challenging TV game show Jeopardy! Over six regular show appearances in January, Matt correctly “questioned” his way to a spot in the Tournament of Champions in Las Vegas. Of course, we’ll never really know the sum of Matt’s total winnings, for, as they say, what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!

Joe Malherek presented “Nexus of Narcissism: Women’s Beauty Magazines and the Media of Modernity” at the Southern American Studies Association Biennial Meeting, George Mason U. in February 2009; and “From Selling Soap to Shilling ‘Hope’: Shepard Fairey’s Iconic Obama Image and the Commercial Representation of the Revolutionary Spirit” at the Chesapeake American Studies Association, GMU in April. He spent this past summer at the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell U., taking Geoff Eley's seminar, "Fascism, Modernity, Politics, Aesthetics."

Eid Mohamed is currently working on his dissertation entitled, “Who Defines Me: Orientalism Revisited and Occidentalism Redefined in the Post- 9/11 Era.” He was awarded a scholarship to attend the 2009 Clinton Institute for American Studies summer session at University College Dublin in Ireland this past summer. This fall, Eid has been selected for a full time internship at Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. And he has co-organized a panel along with Prof. Evelyn Alsultany entitled, "East/West Visual Encounters in the Post-9/11 Era" for the next MESA meeting in Boston where he will present his paper entitled, "Farewell Arab Kiss: US Image in Post 9/11 Arab World."

John O’Keefe is currently working on his dissertation which focuses on the citizenship practices of immigrants in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This past year, John presented two papers: "Alien Enemies or Naturalized Citizens? Representations of British-born residents in the United States during the War of 1812" at the Sixth Annual Conference in Citizenship Studies: Representing Citizenship in March; and "'You Will Cause to be Removed, as heretofore Prescribed': Official and Popular Responses to Perceived Threats from British Alien Enemies in the United States during the War of 1812" at the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) Annual Meeting in June. John was awarded a grant from the Cosmos Club Foundation to help fund his trip to Ireland this summer to study passenger lists and letters of Irish immigrants to the US during this period.

Kyle Riissmandel gave a paper entitled, "Parental Advisory—Explicit Lyrics: The Culture Wars Construct the Suburbs in the 1980s" for a panel he organized, "At the Crossroads of Representation and Use: Negotiating Conflict and Distinction on the Postwar Sub/Urban Landscape" at the ASA conference in Albuquerque, NM.


Kevin Strait presented a paper entitled "A Tone Parallel: Race, Politics, and Minstrelsy in the Works of Duke Ellington," at the Mid-Atlantic Popular Culture Association in Niagara Falls, Ontario in Fall 2008. He was also an invited speaker at the "UJAMAA Alumni of Color Panel," presenting on the topic of academic scholarship and the role of race in graduate studies at Wesleyan University in Spring 2009. Kevin is planning on defending his dissertation in December 2009.

Joan Fragaszy Troyano was an organizer and chair of two panels this past fall at the ASA conference, Albuquerque, NM: “Framing Visual Evidence: The Position of Visual and Popular Culture in American Studies,” and “The Futures of American Studies and Ethnic Studies.”

Kim Yates, Sandra Heard, Laura Cook Kenna, Greg Borchardt, Lars Lierow, Matt Kohlstedt at the GW American/Urban Studies Lecture Reception

Amber Wiley presented a paper entitled, “School Grounds Turned Battleground for Preservation: The Case of Dunbar High School in Washington, DC” at the ASA conference in Albuquerque, NM, and also spoke on the future of integration in Washington, DC in a panel discussion as part of the Washington Ethical Society’s Spark! Speaker Series. She also had a brief appearance on WJLA ABC 7’s local news coverage on the battle to preserve the Third Church of Christ, Scientist in Washington, DC.

In April 2009, faculty and graduate students gathered for the 3rd Annual GW American Studies Conference, “Collected Stories.” Developed by graduate student Ramzi Fawaz, and assisted by fellow graduate student Sandra Heard, this two-day event reached new heights this year with the addition of our first guest speaker, Dr. Alondra Nelson. At the time of the conference, Dr. Nelson was Assistant Professor of African American Studies, American Studies, and Sociology at Yale University, and is currently Associate Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, with an appointment in their Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Prof. Nelson’s paper, “Reconciliation Projects: Slavery, Memory and the Social Life of DNA,” was presented as part of her new work on the intersections of contemporary genetic technologies and racial identity in late 20th century US culture.

Combining incisive ethnographic analysis and science as culture studies scholarship, Prof. Nelson discussed the diverse ways in which scientific forms of knowledge (or “facticity”) about genetic ancestry serve as generative and unpredictable elements which work in tandem with other forms of local and familial knowledge in the development of contemporary African American identity. Her scholarship found many intersections with the interests of our own faculty and graduate student community, and the questions raised by her current work helped fuel discussions about race, identity, technology, and their mutual imbrication far beyond the confines of the conference.

In addition to Prof. Nelson’s keynote address and discussion, we were honored to provide an engaging and interactive forum in which current students and faculty could present their current research. Papers were presented in the following order:

- **John O'Keefe** - Alien Enemies or Naturalized Citizens? Representations of British-born Residents in the United States During the War of 1812
- **Matt Kohlstedt** - Henry Field and FDR's “M” Project: American Anthropological Discourse & the “Refugee Problem”
- **Andrew Noel** - “I, Monster”: Sergio Leone, Žižekian Revolutionary Terror & the Politics of Moral Unsentimentality
- **Emily Dufton** - The Meaningless Mob: Flash Mobs, Slash Mobs, & What They (Don't) Mean
- **Katie Brian** - The Sound of Authority: Hallucinatory Aural Culture & Aural Observation at the Government Hospital for the Insane, 1875-1905
- **Elisabeth Anker** - The Melodramatic Imagination in American Politics
- **Elaine Peña** - George, Martha, & Pocahontas: A Critical Look at American Ethos on the U.S.-Mexico Border
- **Leah Plasse** - The Scars of Washington, DC's 1968 Riots: The Metamorphosis of Collective Memory Divided Along Race & Class Over Forty Years
- **David Kieran** - “This Isn’t Vietnam” / “This Will Be Vietnam”: Vietnam’s Legacy & the Potential for Trauma in the Popular Culture of the “War on Terror”
Camilo José Vergara
Harlem: The Unmaking of a Ghetto

On February 12, 2009, our department was honored to host the first of a new annual lecture series addressing themes in American Studies, entitled “Harlem: the Unmaking of a Ghetto.” Renowned documentary photographer and historian Camilo José Vergara presented a selection of his photographs depicting the transformation of Harlem from a landscape of urban decay and disinvestment in the 1970s to a site of gentrification and speculation in the 2000s.

Camilo José Vergara & host Prof. Suleiman Osman

Trained as a sociologist, Vergara specializes in repeatedly photographing, sometimes over the course of decades, the same structures and neighborhoods in impoverished urban areas (see sample progression at right). His photographs have been exhibited widely and acquired by institutions such as the Library of Congress, The New York Public Library, the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, and the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. For more details about Vergara’s work, including his numerous books and current exhibits, go to: http://invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu/intro.html

Prof. Teresa Murphy & Dr. Margaret Whitehead

Vergara’s lecture began with introductions by CCAS Dean Peg Barratt and Dr. Frank Goodyear, assistant curator of photography at the National Portrait Gallery. The event was held in the Marvin Center amphitheater for a capacity crowd. A reception followed the talk where alumni, faculty, and graduate students could meet the author. The evening was capped off with a dinner in honor of our guest, attended by faculty, AMST alumnus Dr. Margaret Whitehead, and DC Historical Society members Kathryn Schneider Smith and Jane Freundel Levey who have both served as directors of Cultural Tourism DC. During dinner the guests spoke about forging greater intellectual ties between GWU, alumni, and surrounding DC institutions around the topic of urban studies and American Studies.
Elisabeth Anker reports that she had a great first year as a member of the American Studies department. She taught an undergraduate course on "Freedom in American Thought and Popular Culture" and a Dean's Seminar for freshmen on "Popular Culture After 9/11." Libby also taught "Debating Democracy in America," a graduate seminar which examined the idea of democracy as presented by various authors from Alexis de Tocqueville to Michel Foucault, and media from Mr. Smith Goes to Washington to Syriana. She enjoyed all three classes and is glad to be a part of such a dynamic intellectual community. This year, Libby published an essay in Political Theory titled "National Love in Violent Times," and served as discussant for Pulitzer Prize winner Edward P. Jones's lecture to GW's Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. She was also featured in the documentary film Stealing America Vote by Vote released nationwide during the Fall 2008 presidential campaign. She presented her research at the American Political Science Association, Association for Political Theory, DC Queer Studies Annual Meeting, and Western Political Science Association. But her favorite presentation forum was our own “Collected Studies” Conference, where she presented her work on melodrama to the AMST community. This winter, Libby will be finishing her book manuscript, The Venomous Eye: Melodrama and the Promise of American Democracy, which examines the melodramatic forms of public discourse that circulate in American politics.

Tom Guglielmo enjoyed a productive year at Harvard's Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, writing portions of his book-in-progress, Race War. He presented pieces of this work at Harvard, Emory, the Aspen Ideas Festival, and the yearly conference of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Policy. He also chaired and commented on immigration history panels and papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society and at the annual meetings of the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association.

Chad Heap returns to GW this fall after spending the year as a visiting scholar at New York University’s Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. While on sabbatical, he presented papers at NYU and at the biennial meeting of the American Studies Association of Turkey in Istanbul. He also began work on his next research project, a reconstructed ethnography of Chicago’s Depression-era gay community, based on roughly forty life histories and other field notes gathered by University of Chicago sociology graduate student Earle W. Bruce in the latter half of the 1930s. By the time Bruce compiled his findings in 1942, the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis had become so predominant in the study of homosexuality that he chose not to produce one of the qualitative community studies for which the “Chicago school” is so widely remembered. Rather, he composed a study of the personality traits of gay men by comparing their psychological test results with the life histories he had gathered. Returning to Bruce’s original research, Chad plans to recreate the ethnography Bruce might have written in the old Chicago style, while simultaneously investigating both the limitations of such earlier sociological approaches to the study of sexuality and the challenges that such sources pose to historians some seventy years later. This academic year, Chad also plans to develop two new courses: an undergraduate research seminar in the fall focused on “Nighttime in America,” and the spring half of the department’s new graduate sequence examining “Gender, Sexuality, and American Culture.” In addition, he plans to engage in the shameless promotion of his recently published book, Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940 (University of Chicago Press). For one such example, check out Chad’s May 20th appearance on the BBC Radio 4 program Thinking Allowed, where host Laurie Taylor and African American playwright and novelist Bonnie Greer chat with Chad about Slumming. Streaming audio is available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00kfgcv.


Faculty News—continued on next page

Kip was selected to join the 2009-11 class of “Young Scholars” in American Religion, run by the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). In April he and the nine other scholars met for their first semi-annual meeting, where they attended a series of workshops led by senior faculty mentors Clark Gilpin and Tracy Fessenden. Kip continues to serve as the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the AMST department. In the spring he taught a freshman Dean’s Seminar entitled “America in the Twenties” that featured a class trip to see The Curious Case of Benjamin Button. Kip and the department also sponsored Lala Abasova, a visiting scholar from the American Studies Center at Baku State University in Baku, Azerbaijan. Lala was here to develop a course on American religion to teach in her home country, but she also taught us much about the history and culture of the Caucasus.


Melani McAlister reports that the best thing about her year was having the opportunity to teach two new classes. (Actually, AMST 168 Cultural Criticism isn’t new, but it had been quite awhile!) Both semesters were wonderful, with students writing research papers on everything from young multi-lingual poets, to representations of Appalachia, to the culture of the GW gym. Melani also team-taught a graduate seminar on U.S. and the World with Professor Andrew Zimmerman from the History department. A motley crew of AMST and HIST grad students, plus a few from other fields, created a great environment for talking about the vexing question: “What IS transnational American studies?” Melani was also Director of Graduate Studies, which made for an extremely busy and engaging year. While she claims that paperwork has never been a strong suit, she pushed bravely forward on that front, while also working with our fabulous PhD and MA students. Part of the DGS job is recruitment of new students, and Melani reports that the incoming class for Fall 09 promises to be an outstanding group of young scholars. In terms of life beyond GW, Melani is currently serving as co-chair of the program committee for the 2009 American Studies Association convention in Washington, DC in November. She has planned a research trip to the Congo and Sudan this October. And, as always, she continues to research and write about US evangelicals and global issues.

Faculty News—continued on next page
Jim Miller spent much of 2008 engaged with myriad activities celebrating the centenary of writer Richard Wright’s birth in Natchez, Mississippi on September 8, 1908. Wright’s centennial was an event noted at ceremonies, symposia, and conferences in the US, France, Portugal, and Japan, culminating in the issuing of a Richard Wright stamp by the US Postal Service in April. As editor of the Richard Wright Newsletter, Jim spoke or presented papers on Wright at the Fall for the Book Festival at George Mason University, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Howard University in September 2008; at the Richard Wright symposium at the Dallas African American Museum in November 2008; and at the MELUS Roundtable, “Richard Wright in the 21st Century” at the MLA annual convention in San Francisco in December 2008. In October 2008, Jim traveled to Bogazici University in Istanbul (along with Chad Heap and David Kieran) to attend the annual conference of the American Studies Association of Turkey, where he delivered a keynote address: “Re-thinking Tocqueville’s Prophecy: The Changing Grammar of Race in 21st Century America.” He also participated in a session, “The 2008 Presidential Election: A Discussion and Debate.” Jim spent his sabbatical during Spring 2009 as a Fulbright Scholar in the Department of English/School of Literature and Language Studies at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. There he taught a postgraduate honors seminar, “African American Studies in Literature, Music, and Cinema,” designed to bring African American and South African texts into conversation. He also pursued his current research on African American and South African jazz, spoke at an English Department colloquium on “Reflections on a ‘Post-Racial United States,’” and jointly conducted a public workshop with colleague Susan Pennybacker on “Transnational Methodologies in Historical and Literary Research: The Scottsboro Case in American and Global Culture,” sponsored by WISER (Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research). His article, “The Diasporic Turn: Shifting Paradigms in African-American Studies,” appeared in Americanisms, Michael Steppat, ed., (Bayreuth, Germany: Bayreuth Institute for American Studies, 2009). Jim’s book, Remembering Scottsboro: the Legacy of an Infamous Trial, published by Princeton University Press, was released in May 2009.

Jennifer Nash, our newest faculty member, received her PhD in African American Studies from Harvard University in June 2008. Her dissertation, “The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography,” examines the meaning-making work that black women’s bodies perform on the pornographic screen. This year she also wrote a review article, “Un-disciplining Intersectionality,” which is forthcoming in International Journal of Feminist Politics. In September 2009, she begins a post-doctoral fellowship at Columbia University’s Society of Fellows, where she hopes to revise her dissertation into a book manuscript, and to begin research on two new projects: an examination of literary pornography, focused on black erotic fiction, and an analysis of the sexual economies that connect locations in the black diaspora. She will also offer a course in Columbia’s Women and Gender Studies Department on black feminist theory and activism. She is already looking forward to next summer, when she will be moving to DC and joining the American Studies and Women’s Studies communities at GW.

Suleiman Osman completed a busy third year at GW. In Fall 2008, Suleiman signed a contract with Oxford University Press to publish his manuscript, The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Race, Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Brooklyn, 1930-1980. Throughout the year, he gave a number of invited lectures, including “Towards a Geographic Humanities: What a Historian Can Tell Geographers About Gentrification” for the GW Geography department; and “The Problem of Color Lines: Theorizing Race in the Age of Obama,” Keynote Address at the Chesapeake American Studies Association Annual Conference. He also hosted 24 visiting students and 3 faculty members from the American Studies department of Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands to whom he gave a talk entitled “Obama and the Ethnic Landscape of America.” He chaired a panel entitled “The Media of Poverty” at the Representing Poverty: American and European Perspectives Conference hosted by the German Historical Institute. Suleiman also finished his first year as the convener of the GW University Seminar in
When I first began work on Slumming, I saw the project primarily as a contribution to the history of sexuality. Building on exemplary scholarship that plumbed the complicated interrelation of sexuality, gender, and class, I hoped to examine more systematically how race had shaped American sexual identities and practices. But as I charted the historical progression of slumming from the immigrant and working-class districts of turn-of-the-century New York and Chicago to those cities’ later free-loving bohemian districts, bustling black neighborhoods, and early lesbian and gay enclaves, I realized my project was as much about the history of racial formation and the reorganization of urban space as it was about sexuality.

While scholars have long investigated the social construction of race and sexuality in the United States, surprisingly few have attempted to examine the ways in which popular conceptions of racial and sexual difference took shape in relation to each other. In Slumming, I seek to address this oversight by demonstrating how race and sexuality became intertwined in this unusual urban pastime, and by showing how the pastime itself contributed significantly to the emergence and codification of a new twentieth-century hegemonic social order—one that was structured primarily around an increasingly polarized white/black racial axis and a hetero/homo sexual binary that were defined in reciprocal relationship to one another.

In addition, I examine how slumming transformed Americans’ understanding of urban space. As the pastime came to focus less on the geographic space of the slum itself and more on the amelioration of slumming, it encouraged participants to view the new urban districts and populations they visited in terms of the slum and, thereby, reinforced white Americans’ sense of superiority by associating racial and sexual difference with dilapidation and immorality.

Since similar processes are underway in today’s gentrifying cities, I hope readers of Slumming will give as much thought to their own interconnected perceptions of race, sexuality, and urban space, as they will to the historical processes my book describes.

See also, The New Yorker for a review of Prof. Heap’s book, at http://www.newyorker.com/arts/reviews/brieflynoted/2009/06/29/090629crbn_brieflynoted2

When considering the history of radical pacifism in the United States, perhaps the first question to ask is “What’s the point?” Why write about a belief system that apparently has become so marginal, so irrelevant, so invisible? We may oppose this or that war, but who can really embrace pacifism when confronted with such notorious figures as Adolf Hitler or Osama bin Laden? And yet, in the course of researching Acts of Conscience, I found that radical pacifists had actually turned these questions around: How can we not address violence when violence was at the heart of virtually every major crisis of the 20th century? Indeed, historians state that, in this catastrophic hundred-year period, an estimated 200 million people were killed by some form of organized slaughter. Hence, radical pacifists insisted that countering this epidemic of violence was the most urgent modern project, a project that non-pacifists (myself included) have ignored all too frequently.

The pacifist tradition is especially relevant in our own time, when political decision makers assume that a position of nonviolence is quaint, naïve, or an affectation of “The Sixties.” Acts of Conscience puts nonviolence back into its historical context as a sophisticated response to the overwhelming crises of the 20th century. In the face of these events, radical pacifists undertook dramatic individual acts that achieved surprising political and cultural power. The cover depicts the “Union Eight,” a group of seminary students who were imprisoned after refusing to register for the World War II draft. Their audacity provoked controversy then and now: Were they heroic? foolish? or dangerously wrong-headed? Whatever we think, these were not otherworldly saints holding olive branches, but worldly people grappling with moral responsibility amid unprecedented global calamity.

A few years ago I met with one of the Union Eight, George Houser (third from the right on the book jacket). In the early civil rights movement, Houser led protests and had a major role in promoting anti-apartheid and independence movements in Africa. Now in his nineties, he still lives with his wife Jean in a small house they built after World War II in an interracial pacifist community outside of New York City. When I visited him, he told me he attends a small weekly vigil on a nearby street corner to protest the war in Iraq. Nearly seven decades after his shocking stand for nonviolence, George Houser is still putting conscience into action.
Remembering Scottsboro: The Legacy of an Infamous Trial  
by James A. Miller  
Princeton University Press, 2009

*Remembering Scottsboro* emerged out of what I conceived at the time to be a larger research project on African American cultural politics of the 1930s. In my research as a Scholar-in-Residence at the Schomburg Center for Black Research I quickly discovered that, in 1930s America, all roads led to Scottsboro, Alabama. At the same time, my friend, colleague, and British historian Susan Pennybacker, had independently come across accounts of the Scottsboro case during several visits to Russia where she was conducting research at the Russian State Archives of Social and Political History in Moscow. Our conversations about this material led to a jointly authored paper, “Images of Scottsboro: Racial Politics and Internationalism in the 1930s,” presented at “Racializing Class, Classifying Race: A Conference on Labour and Difference in Africa, USA and Britain,” held at St. Antony’s College, Oxford University in 1997. We subsequently enlisted the considerable intelligence and talents of our close friend and colleague Eve Rosenhaft, a German historian at the University of Liverpool, to expand and sharpen our grasp of the European dimensions of the Scottsboro case. We jointly presented versions of this research in London and Manchester, England and Muenster, Germany. This work, in turn, provided the basis for our jointly-authored article, “Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931–34,” which was published in the *American Historical Review* in April 2001.

I mention this background on *Remembering Scottsboro* in some detail because I want to underscore how fundamental collaborative research and scholarship has been to the completion of this project. Our *AHR* article was a condensed version of a much longer manuscript and, at one point, we considered jointly authoring a book-length study. In the final analysis, we decided to branch off and pursue individual projects: Susan Pennybacker’s *From Scottsboro to Munich: Racial Politics in 1930s Britain* has recently been published, also by Princeton. Eve Rosenhaft’s work is forthcoming. And future collaborative works on Scottsboro and related issues are being considered. But my point is: interdisciplinary work on transnational issues can benefit considerably from the kind of conversations and collaboration we have pursued. At the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, where I just concluded a semester as a Fulbright Scholar, the term “transnational” is very much in the air; and I have argued here that “transnational studies” requires much closer attention to transnational methodologies. This, in turn, calls for more fruitful intellectual exchanges among scholars across disciplines and nations, that can push the boundaries of knowledge forward.

On another level, I wanted to add my voice to those scholars and writers who have—rightly, in my view—seen the Scottsboro case as a pivotal moment in American history. I did not see this work as an exercise in what I call ‘retrospective indignation’—although, to be sure, I would like to think that it will provoke reflections about race and the judicial system in the United States. But I also see *Remembering Scottsboro* as a meditation on representations of ‘race’—in the fullest sense of the word—and (for those of us reared on the essays of S.I. Hayakawa) the ways in which language affects thought and action.

Women and the Making of America  
by Mari Jo Buhle, Teresa Murphy, and Jane Gerhard  
Prentiss Hall, 2008

*Women and the Making of America* went on sale this year and is being adopted in women’s history courses around the country. The textbook explores and synthesizes important new scholarship in the field of US women’s history, creating a revisionist narrative that integrates the experiences of women and the meaning of gender in the larger story of power relations in US history. Along with co-authors Jane Gerhard and Mari Jo Buhle, I paid particular attention to issues of sexuality and globalization in the ways they have constructed the history of women. Having written the early American chapters, I am particularly excited to have drawn on scholarship from the new field of ethnohistory that analyzes different experiences of Native American women, and their significance in creating a gendered frontier. I also drew heavily on the growing body of research that highlights the influence of the Spanish and French empires (as well as the British) in the shaping of early America, and was fascinated to find the ways in which women’s legal status in the French and Spanish empires differed significantly from those in British colonies.

I used the book for the first time last fall in teaching my women’s history class and was thrilled to be able to throw out all of my lecture notes. I have revised this class into a more interactive experience in which students read the text and various scholarly articles, and come to class prepared to debate issues rather than simply take notes. Laurel Clark (PhD 2008), who is now teaching at the University of Hartford, also used the text and said her students loved it. Let’s hope other professors around the country agree.
Living as Equals: How Three White Communities Struggled to Make Interracial Connections During the Civil Rights Era
by Phyllis Palmer
Vanderbilt University Press, 2008

When I began the thinking and research that produced Living as Equals, I simply wanted to find interracial connections that I knew from my own life existed during the Civil Rights era, but were not part of the standard history. Learning about a few organized efforts to cross the color line as legal and social barriers came down led to a more specific question: How did White Americans who were not resistant to social change respond to the myriad possibilities opened by the Civil Rights movement? This book tells three stories of intentional efforts to transform the old paradigms of racial segregation and White dominance into new discourses of mutual respect and care. The National Conference of Christians and Jews ran summer camps in New York and Los Angeles where young people broke taboos about social segregation and came to believe, much to the dismay of many parents, that interracial dating and marriage were fine and fun. In Washington, DC, the group Neighbors, Inc. led a battle to end the racial designation of “Colored” in real estate ads. They also joined coalitions to open housing in Virginia, Maryland, and DC, and to protect the interracial neighborhoods of Takoma and Shepherd Park. These White and Black middle-class families constructed a picture of tolerant, multi-racial cosmopolitanism to counter the predominant 1950s allure of White-only suburban family life. And in San Antonio, some Northside Anglos, who organized in churches and unions with help from Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation, joined a political coalition with Westside Mexican Americans to claim a voice in city governance for people other than Anglo businessmen. I hope Living as Equals encourages contemporary Americans to continue reaching across the divisions that perpetuate residential segregation, de facto school segregation, and the ongoing equation of White with American.